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A WORLD TO WIN
1940—1942

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A WORLD TO WIN

1940—1942

By
UPTON SINCLAIR



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Up to the year 1938 there had been issued in European countries a total of 690 titles of the books of Upton Sinclair, and in India, China, and Japan, a total of 57. The number of books cannot be estimated, but in Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union the total was over seven millions. I have no way of learning how many of these readers have survived the Great Blackout, but I take this opportunity to send to them my greetings and my hopes. May they succeed in building the new world, dedicated to the practice of democracy, both industrial and political, as I have tried to explain it in many books and pamphlets. For the benefit of these old readers and of others who may be interested, I have placed as an appendix to this, the seventh volume of the *World's End* series, the data as to foreign editions of the series, issued or in preparation, up to March 1946.

UPTON SINCLAIR.

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BOOK ONE

THE PELTING OF THIS PITILESS STORM

I

The Hurt That Honour Feels

I

LANNY kept thinking: This must be the only man in France who can smile. At least it was the only one Lanny had met, and Lanny had done some travelling in this time of agony and grief. The man whose name spelled backward the same as forward, and who all his life had taken this as an omen of good luck—this man was in power again; he was overcoming all his enemies, thousands of them, yes, even millions. He sat at his desk by the window of what had once been a luxurious hotel suite, and beamed upon his visitor, reminding him: "It has happened just about as I told you, M. Budd." Lanny said it was so, and thought that the death of something like a hundred and twenty-five thousand Frenchmen, and the captivity of ten or twelve times as many, signified less to Pierre Laval than the ability to say: "*C'est moi qui avais raison!*"

It was midsummer of the year 1940, and a hot wind was blowing from the deserts of Africa over the plains of Central France. The French are never prone to open windows, and the Vice-Premier was shut tightly in his overdecorated office. He made no concession to summer fashions, but wore his customary black suit and the white bow tie which had become his trademark in French politics. He mopped his swarthy forehead as he talked, and now and then passed the damp handkerchief around his neck; elegance had never been his role, and the fact that he had amassed one or two hundred million francs made no difference. Now and then he chewed on his thick black moustache, and when he smoked his cigarette too low, Lanny feared that the fire might reach this adornment. Laval had odd slanting eyes, and his enemies called him *le fripon mongol*; the "rascal" part of this was undoubtedly true, and the other half might have been—who can say?

Ordinarily he was a free talker, but now he chose to listen, for his caller had just come down from Paris, and had talked there with

the Führer of the conquering Germans. Laval was in touch with Paris, getting his orders, more or less politely disguised; also, there were German representatives here in Vichy, making no secret of their authority. But one who knew the Nazi leaders personally, and chatted with them socially, might pick up hints that could be got in no other way. An American was supposed to be a neutral, a friend of both sides; so the Mongolian rascal put one question after another and listened attentively. What were Hitler's real intentions toward *la patrie*? What would they be when Britain had quit? To what extent would he leave the control of French business in French hands? And what would be his attitude toward the Fleet? Delicate questions, which a statesman did not ask except from one he trusted.

And Britain? Lanny had been there just before Dunkirk, less than two months ago. What did the true friends of France in that country think about the present deplorable situation? What chance did they have to advocate their cause? Pierre Laval hated England with a bitterness which had now become a sort of mania, but he would be careful about giving voice to his feelings in the presence of an Anglo-Saxon. He would listen while Lanny talked about his "appeaser" friends, the extreme difficulties they now faced, and the work they were doing, quietly and yet effectively, to bring this blind meaningless struggle to an end.

"I don't suppose there is any more need for secrecy," said the friend of all good Europeans. "I carried a message from the Maréchal to Lord Wickthorpe; but I found that it was too late."

"Have you seen the Maréchal here?" inquired the other.

"No, *cher Maître*. It was Baron Schneider's suggestion that I should consult you first." *Cher Maître* is the way you address a French lawyer when you are a colleague or an important client; from Lanny Budd it was a delicate reminder of their last meeting, in the home of Denis de Bruyne, an old-time fellow-conspirator of Laval's. It meant that Lanny had lived in France and understood nuances, a word invented by a people who live by them. The butcher's son who had once been head of the nation would know that this was the son of a great aeroplane manufacturer, and the former husband of one of the richest women in America. Lanny Budd, a friend of the great, knew how to deal with them, flattering them, teasing them now and then, above all never failing to entertain them.

Presently the Vice-Premier inquired: "Where are you staying?"

"I haven't looked up a place," was the reply. "I checked my bags at the *gare*."

"You may have trouble, because this town is packed to the last attic and cellar."

"So I have been told; but I thought more of France than of my

own comfort. You know, your country has been my home since I was a babe in arms."

"Perhaps you had better come out and spend the night at my place. In the morning I will see what can be done for you."

"You are very kind, *cher Maitre*."

"Not at all; I want more talk with you." But Lanny knew that an honour was being done him, for the French rarely open their homes to strangers—and especially not when a million or two have come staggering into your peaceful province, and your gates are besieged by a horde of people, starving and many of them wounded, craving no more than to share the shelter you give to your horses and cattle; and convinced that they have some claim upon you because you are a friend of the people, and they have attended your public meetings, joined your party, voted for you, and worked for your election to the *Chambre*.

II

It was the Bourbonnais province, almost in the geographical centre of France. Fourteen miles from Vichy lies the village of Châteldon, where Pierre Laval had been born. His father had been the village butcher, tavernkeeper, and postmaster—which of these you heard mention depended upon whether it was an enemy or a dependent of the great man who spoke. The lad had been put to work early, driving to the railroad to fetch the mail; apparently it was not locked up, for while the old nag jogged along, the driver read the newspapers, and so learned about politics in his native land and what the great Napoleon had called "the career open to talents."

Little Pierre had had talents, and had convinced his father and got an education. He had become the most rascally lawyer in France, and had come back a multimillionaire and bought the ancient castle which dominated the place of his birth. Also the mineral springs, whose water Madame de Sévigné had held superior to the water of Vichy. Pierre had known how to exploit that fact, and how to get the water on sale in the restaurant cars of his country's railroads. One of his fortunes had come from it; and sitting at cushioned ease in his shiny black Mercedes he forgot his country's troubles for a while and told funny stories about those early days—stories not always to his credit, but he didn't mind, provided that he had come out ahead on the deal.

The village has two rivers flowing through it, and high mountains surrounding it. The medieval castle has a round tower and a square tower, and the cottages and smaller houses are gathered close around it for protection, like chicks about a mother hen. The visitor's first

impression was that it was neither very elegant nor very sanitary; but then, he reflected, neither was its owner.

The residence was the manor house, and when Lanny went inside he perceived that this had been remodelled to fit it for a great gentleman's residence. Before dinner he was taken in his role of art expert to see the murals in the castle. Over the immense mantelpiece in the dining-room hung a painting representing the defeat of the English troops in the battle of Auvergne during the Hundred Years' War. It was by a painter of the so-called Fontainebleau School; Lanny had never heard his name, but naturally he wasn't going to say this to the proud *propriétaire*. He praised the school, saying that its contribution to the art of historical representation was coming to be more and more appreciated. This pleased Pierre greatly; he said that whenever he found himself discouraged by the present international situation he came into this old banquet hall and read the inscription beneath the mass of charging horses and men-at-arms. It was in Gothic lettering, and told the lord of Châteldon that "Here the English were so well received that they never returned."

"God damn that bastard Churchill!" exclaimed Pierre Laval; and Lanny Budd politely agreed that he was a curmudgeonly character

III

Madame Laval had been the daughter of the village doctor, and had risen as high as possible in her land. Like a sensible Frenchwoman she had stuck by her man in spite of his many forms of misconduct. They had had a daughter, with the black hair, olive skin, and slanting eyes of her father. He had been wont to exhibit her in the law courts and the Palais Bourbon, to show his fellow-deputies what a devoted family man he was. In due course it had become necessary to find her a husband, and Pierre had selected René, Comte de Chambrun, son of a French general and lineal descendant of the Marquis de Lafayette. One does not get a son-in-law like that without paying, and Pierre had put up a *dot* which was written in eight figures and had been whispered with awe all over the land. If anyone forgot it, Pierre would whisper it again.

They sat at the family dinner table. René was an international lawyer and his father-in-law's faithful errand boy; Lanny thought: He looks like a jumping jockey. José—pronounced French fashion, with a soft "j" and the "s" as "z"—was the most elegant lady in smart society. Both of them had met the son of Budd-Erling, and found him acceptable. His tropical worsted suit had been cut by the best tailor and everything about him was in harmony. He was to be

forty in about three months, but his wavy brown hair showed no trace of grey. His neatly clipped little moustache looked like a movie star's, and his amiable smile suggested to the ladies that he was a person of kindness, and without guile. This last, unfortunately, was not entirely true.

The ladies questioned him eagerly about what had become of this person and that—one's friends were so scattered in these dreadful days, and it was all but impossible to communicate with them, on account of censors and submarines. But all the members of this snug little family were certain that the storm would blow over soon, and Europe would settle down to the longest period of peace it had ever known. The British would realize the futility of further resistance—and what more could they ask than the assurance that Hitler held out to them, that he had no slightest desire to interfere with or threaten the British Empire?

They wanted to know what their guest thought; and Lanny spoke according to his role of art expert who did not meddle in politics, and who so far had been able to travel where he wished. Naturally his friends told him what they thought, and what they wished to have reported, and he reported it, though without guaranteeing it. What he reported concerning England was that Churchill's position was strong at present, but there was quiet opposition growing among influential persons, and perhaps after London had been bombed a few times they would be able to make headway.

The *père de famille* said that it had been the prime task of French statesmanship to keep Paris from sharing the fate of Warsaw and Rotterdam, and in that, at least, they had been victorious. Madame added, piously: "*Grâce à dieu!*"—and then added her opinion as to the source of all the trouble, that there were too many foreigners in her country, and especially Jews. Lanny agreed politely, in his secret heart recalling that one of the ladies with whom her husband's name had been connected through the years had been of gypsy descent, while another had been a daughter of the wealthy family named Goldsky.

But it was Jewish men they were thinking about now: Blum and Mandel, that accursed pair who had been fighting Pierre Laval ever since he had deserted the working-class movement that had elected him to the Chamber of Deputies. They it was who had forced the ruinous alliance with Russia, which had made friendship with Germany impossible; they it was who had almost succeeded in dragging France to aid the Reds in seizing Spain. They were a traitor pair, and Pierre declared that every power he possessed would be used to have them tried and hanged by the neck. The cords in his own thick neck stood out as he denounced them, and his swarthy face turned crimson. So

many enemies he had, and once he had been able to laugh at them and even with them; but now rage was coming to possess him more and more. It spoiled his dinner, and made his conversation repulsive.

Alone in his study with the visitor, he made it evident that he did not give much credence to Lanny's role as a non-political friend of man. He knew that Lanny had travelled to England on a mission—how could one travel otherwise in these days? Marshal Pétain had sent him, and Madame de Portes, mistress of the then Premier, Paul Reynaud. She had recently been killed in a motor accident, so Pierre couldn't find out from her. Lanny assured his host it was no longer especially important—just one more effort to persuade the British to join with the French in making peace; their position would obviously have been much stronger if they had stood together. Even now it would be stronger, for France had as yet no peace, only an armistice, and it was costing her four hundred million francs per day for the upkeep of the German Army which would have to stay so long as Britain fought. The Germans were using a great part of this sum to buy their way into the key industries of the country, and that would ruin any nation, lamented this lover of money. Lanny agreed, and tactfully refrained from hinting what he had been told by some of his Nazi friends in Paris, that Pierre Laval was handling some of these deals and taking a generous "cut."

And then the old Maréchal. No serpent ever slipped into its hole more silently than Pierre Laval trying to slip into the mind of Lanny Budd and find out why he wanted to see the head of the French State and what he was going to say to that venerable warrior. Lanny was all innocence; the Maréchal was a friend, Lanny's father had known him since World War I and before that, and as salesman for Budd Gunmakers had tried to persuade him that America had a better light machine-gun than France. Now the Maréchal had asked Lanny to try to bring Britain into the armistice, and Lanny had failed, and wanted to tell the old gentleman how sorry he was.

Tactfully the host imparted the fact that when a man is eighty-four years of age his mind is not so active, he tires easily, his memory fails, and he needs guidance. The Maréchal had around him a horde of self-seekers, all trying to pull him in different directions. They played upon his pride in France and his memories of French glory; it was hard for him to face the fact that France was beaten, and that her future was in German hands, and nowhere else. "We cannot have it two ways," declared this black serpent with a white necktie. "If we are going to be friends we have to mean it and act accordingly." When the visitor said, "I agree with you wholeheartedly," Pierre went on to suggest that Lanny Budd should advise his aged friend to declare war upon Britain, and to turn over to the Germans the

remainder of that French Fleet which the British had just attacked with shameless treachery in the ports of North Africa.

Lanny said: "*Cher Maître*, I do not imagine that the chief of your government will ask the advice of an art expert as to state policy; but if he does I will surely tell him that I am a lover of peace and order, and that I think Herr Hitler has discovered the formula by which the spread of Bolshevism over Europe can be checked."

"I perceive that you are a man both wise and tactful, M. Budd," replied the host. "You may do me a favour if you will visit Châteldon again and tell me whatever you can about your interview with the old gentleman. Let me add that I know your social position, and respect it, but at the same time I know what the world is, and that one has to live in it, and if there is any reward within my gift you have only to call upon me."

Lanny smiled. "Herr Hitler has several times made me the same tactful offer, and so has Reichsmarschall Göring. I tell them all that my profession of art expert has always provided for me. I don't need large sums."

"Money is not to be treated lightly," countered the master of Châteldon. "It is like toilet paper, when you need it you need it bad."

IV

Lanny slept well, and in the morning breakfasted on coffee and eggs and marmalade, all of them luxuries in wartime France. Driving back to town, he answered more questions of his host, and did not mind, because he could learn from a man's questions what the man wanted to know, what he hoped and what he feared and what tricks he was up to. When the two parted, Lanny knew of a certainty that Pierre Laval hated the venerable old soldier who was his chief, was counting the weeks or months that he might be expected to live, and was busily intriguing with the Nazis to be permitted to take his place.

The trouble was that the Nazis needed Pétain, or thought they did, to keep the French people quiet. Pétain was the hero of Verdun, whose picture was in every peasant's hut, whereas it was hard to find anyone who would trust Laval around the corner. Laval was all for doing whatever the Nazis demanded; he argued vehemently to Lanny that when you had once chosen sides you could no longer remain on both sides—as the ancient figurehead was trying to do. Pétain wouldn't let the Nazis have the French Fleet, or the air force in Africa, or the troops in Syria; he clung to these things as the last pawns in a lost game; he promised this and that, and then delayed to keep the promise, and argued over petty details in his stubborn dotard's way,

and not even the shrewd Vice-Premier could be sure whether it was stupidity or malice.

Laval had arranged for the American to have a room in one of the cheaper hotels, the better ones having been taken over by the different government departments. It meant that somebody was turned out, but Lanny wasn't told who and didn't inquire. He deposited his bags and then went for a stroll, to take in the sights of this small resort city which had become overnight a sort of left-handed world capital. It lies in the broad valley of the river Allier, and its warm baths and mineral waters have been famous since the days of the ancient Romans. They were full of bubbling gases which made them seem alive, and whether this helped your stomach or not, you believed that it did, and that could help you immensely.

In modern days the wealthy had flocked here, and there had been built for them the magnificent Hotel du Parc, surrounded with plane trees; its five stories and broad tower were now crowded by offices of the new government. There were baths all over the place; one of them, the Thermal Établissement, covering seven acres, could take care of thirty-five hundred persons per day; you could float over red marble, or green marble, or mosaic tiles, and later you could stroll in palm-shaded porticoes and chat with your fashionable friends. There was every kind of luxury to be had for a price; the poor clamoured for a hunk of tasteless grey bread, but for the wealthy there were still the dainty little brown cubes and the *croissants* to which they were accustomed. The jewellery shops did a land-office business, both buying and selling; for jewels are the most easily hidden and transported form of wealth—in an extreme emergency they can even be swallowed.

Lanny Budd was an art expert, and wherever he went he renewed his acquaintance with the dealers, and made inquiries concerning private collections. This was not merely the way he earned his living, it was also his camouflage; he had always in his suitcase a file of correspondence, and when it was opened and inspected in his absence—something which happened now in every country of Europe—the most suspicious police spy would be satisfied that the visitor was really the friend of American millionaires and the possible means of bringing real dollars into the poverty-stricken land.

You could never know in what part of France you might find an art treasure. In the dingy ancient mansions which were scattered about this countryside there might be some old work whose value the owner did not realize; or there might be some modern master who had fled from the Nazi tanks and bombing planes, and now was glad to exchange a painting for a loaf of the adulterated grey bread. Lanny strolled into the fashionable dealers' shops and introduced himself, and looked at what they had to show him and listened to

their sales talks. His mind was a card catalogue of personalities in "The States" to whom these sights and sounds might or might not appeal, and now and then he would ask a price and shake his head and say that it was much too high.

V

In one of the sidewalk cafés the visitor ordered an omelet and a salad, and while waiting he watched the few rich and the many poor who thronged the sidewalk. There were several million refugees in Vichy France, and as many discharged soldiers who had no place to go and nothing to do; many had no shelter but the trees in the park, and no food but what they could beg or steal. The son of Budd-Erling had been born into the leisure class, and had had to learn to eat his food and digest it, in spite of knowing that there were swarms of people about him who had poor food or none at all. He had been taught that it was their own fault; and anyhow, it had been that way through the ages and would be for ages to come and there was nothing you could do about it. Lanny no longer held that idea, and was trying to do something, after a fashion peculiar to himself.

Now and then he looked at his wrist-watch; and presently, having paid his *addition*, he arose and strolled on. In Paris he had received a letter signed Bruges, telling him of an excellent collection of Daumier drawings which were for sale in Vichy, and adding that the writer of the letter could be seen at the Santé baths at two o'clock any afternoon. Lanny approached the place, but did not go inside; he strolled on the other side of the street at the hour named, and presently he saw, passing the baths, a dark-haired slender man wearing the dungarees and blouse of a peasant of this district. Lanny made sure that the man had seen him, and then he strolled on; out of town, along the banks of the blue Allier which flows through this fertile land, northward until it joins the Loire. Under the shadow of a willow tree he stopped, and the other man joined him and they clasped hands. "*Eh, bien, Lanny!*" and "*Eh, bien, Raoul!* How did you manage to get a letter through to Paris?"

"We have our ways," smiled the younger man, a Spaniard who had lived a full half of his life in France. He had delicately carved features and an ascetic face, as if he had not had a real meal for a long time; but when he met Lanny Budd he was so happy that the blood returned to his cheeks and he flashed a fine set of Nature's own white teeth.

"I was worried about you," Lanny said. "Can you be safe in this nest of intrigue?"

"I have papers; they aren't genuine, but I'm all right unless the

police should take my fingerprints, and I'll do my best not to get in their way."

"You know the terms of the armistice, Raoul. The French must surrender on demand anyone whom the Nazis want, and so long as Laval holds power they will do it."

"I know; but I have a job with a family who can be trusted. You won't want me to talk about it."

"Of course not. Your letter said Daumier, and I suppose that means left-wing politics. What have you to tell me?"

"We have a small centre of activity here, and I think it will spread. I need a little money, but mostly I want your advice, what our line should be. Everybody is bewildered, and the main task is to keep them from despair."

"I know, Raoul, it's awful. I have a hard time myself."

"What hope can I hold out to anybody?"

"Britain is going to go on fighting; that I am sure of. The appeasers there have all had to crawl into their holes."

"But how long can Britain hold out against the entire Continent?"

"Hitler has told me that he means to invade, and I think he means it. But I think the Fleet will stop him."

"But the air, Lanny! He will bomb all the cities to rubble."

"He will if he can. Nobody can guess how it will turn out. But this I am sure of, Britain will not quit."

"And America?"

"We will send what help we can without getting into the war. That is the plan at present. How we'd behave if we saw Britain on the ropes I don't know. Public opinion over there is changing fast, but whether it will be fast enough, who can say?"

"And what can the French workers do, Lanny?"

"First, you have to give up the class struggle; forget it absolutely. There's only one enemy now, and that is Hitler. Churchill has to be your friend, no matter how little you like him."

"That's pretty hard doctrine for my comrades, Lanny."

"I know; but it's the fact, and every one of us has to face it."

"After what the British did to our Fleet!"

"What else could they do? They gave the French the choice, to be interned, or to go to America, or else to be knocked out."

"I know; but to the average Frenchman it seemed like a massacre."

"We can't appeal to the average Frenchman; we have to reach the exceptional ones, who understand what the enemy is and how many tricks he has. The Nazis want us to hate the British, because Britain is the last bulwark against them; and that tells us what to do. If Hitler can get the use of what is left of the French Fleet he can control the Mediterranean, and take the Suez Canal and the oil of

Mesopotamia. That is where the fight is going, and where we have to help."

"You would advise me to go to Toulon?"

"If you can get any contacts with the sailors, or with the workers in the dockyards and the arsenal—yes."

Raoul Palma, for nearly two decades the director of a workers' school in Cannes, could think of one-time students in almost every corner of the Midi. Many had been taken into the army, and their fate was unknown to him. Some had turned Communist, and were now describing this as "an imperialist war." Some had prospered, and were no longer keen about the cause of the dispossessed. Their ex-teacher sat beneath the grateful shade of a willow tree and wrinkled his brow in thought; presently he said: "I suppose I could manage it, Lanny. Toulon will be a carefully guarded place, and I'll have to go slow."

"Do what you can, and remember this: the Nazis may have the power to seize the Fleet, but they haven't the personnel to operate it. They would need a year or two to train Germans to use all that complicated machinery, and it is there that our hope lies. Right now the struggle in Vichy is between Laval's gang, who want to go all out with Hitler, and Pétain and his friends, who want to keep a partially independent France. I spent last night in Laval's home, so I can give you the straight dope; but you understand, you can't give any hint how you got it."

"I'll suggest a servant as my source."

"That would go all right. The situation is well known here, and will probably come to a head before long. Either the Nazis will oust Pétain and put in Laval, or Pétain will grow sick of intrigue and treachery and bounce the rascal out on his ear. I have been interested to observe that defeat hasn't changed the French politicians in the slightest; they are still pulling wires and wrangling; it is still every man against all the rest, and very little of friendship or even party loyalty."

VI

This was no new role that Lanny Budd was playing. Ever since he had met this young Spanish refugee working in a shoestore in Cannes, and had helped to set him up as director of the workers' school in an abandoned warehouse with a leaky roof, Lanny had been serving as an unsalaried secret agent, watching the activities of his own class, and bringing items of political and financial information which Raoul would put into unsigned articles for the Socialist and labour press of France. Lanny had been doing the same for his friend

Rick, the left-wing journalist in England, and through the years he had had the satisfaction of seeing the workers' movements coming to an ever clearer understanding of the strategy and tactics of their opponents. Of late years he had been meeting his two friends only in strict secrecy, telling them less about how he got his information and asking less about what they did with it. The Nazis had made that necessary, by the grim efficiency of their Gestapo and its deadly cruelty.

"Where is Julie?" Lanny inquired, and Raoul answered that she had stayed in Paris, having contacts there. That was all; Lanny could guess that Raoul's wife had been the means whereby Raoul had got a letter to Lanny in Paris. The Germans had cut off all contact between Occupied and Unoccupied France; at least they had in theory. Postal communication was limited to official printed cards containing statements which you could underline or cross out—nothing else. But the boundary between the two sections, curving all the way from the Spanish border on the west to the Mediterranean on the east, extended for a thousand kilometres, and it would have required an army to keep it sealed day and night; all the Germans could do was to shoot persons who were found in the section they didn't belong in.

These problems the two conspirators discussed in detail. Lanny said: "You can write me from Vichy or Toulon in care of my mother; but don't expect an early reply. I have to go to London, and from there to New York; then, my guess is, I'll come back to Vichy, and if there are letters at Bienvenu I'll get them. But of course nothing except about paintings."

"I understand," replied the other. "You must know that I never mention your name. If one of the old-timers asks about you I shake my head sadly and say that I am afraid you are no longer interested in anything except selling paintings."

"And in my father's fighter planes. Don't forget that I'm a merchant of death! I find it convenient in England, for the British need nothing in the world so much as Budd-Erlings, and when it comes to travel permits and plane accommodations, I rank almost with royalty."

The conference lasted a long time, for they could not meet often, and Raoul wanted to know everything that Lanny could tell about the world situation; the secret purposes of the rulers and exploiters of the different lands, which he would explain to little groups of key workers in the immense dockyards and arsenal of France's great naval port. Some explaining it would take, if they were to learn to love Winston Churchill, arch Tory imperialist whose battleships had just assaulted and blasted half a dozen of France's proudest warships in

the harbours of Oran and Dakar. But Winnie's voice was the one that was bellowing defiance to the Nah-zies, as he called them, and the Nah-zies were the number one enemies of everything the workers of the world cherished.

At last Lanny said: "I have to go now; I have an appointment." He walked back to town alone, for no one must see him in the company of a man in dungarees and blouse, a man who was carrying forged papers, and whose fingerprints would reveal that he was a Spanish Red who had recently been in jail in Toulouse for attempting to protest against the treatment of Spanish refugees in French concentration camps. No, indeed; and least of all if you were on the way to visit the revered personage who until recently had been the French Ambassador to the Madrid Government, and had returned to become head of the newly created État Français, newborn successor to the Troisième République, which Pétain in his youth had learned to refer to as *la salope*, the slut.

VII

The aged Maréchal was established in the Pavillon Sévigné, once home of the lively French lady whose letters were read all over the world. Here he had both home and office, a convenience for one whose powers had waned. It was a large draughty place, all right for the summer, but the old man dreaded to think how it would be when the north winds swept over these broad plains. So he remarked to his visitor, and added, plaintively: "But perhaps I shall not be here then; there are many who would be glad to attend my obsequies." He knew what a cruel world it was—he, the hero of Verdun, who had lived too long for his own good. His secretaries warned all callers that their stay must be brief, and that they must not say anything to irritate or excite the venerable soldier-statesman.

His hair was snow-white and so was his trim little moustache; his features were wrinkled and his expression tired. He had put off his uniform with seven stars on the sleeve, and also the cap with the three tiers of golden oak leaves; he wore a plain black business suit with a black tie. He was a little, dry, formal man, a martinet accustomed to command, rigid, jealous, self-righteous, and set in medieval ideas. His powers were near their ebb; if your speech was too long you would see his eyelids droop and his head nod. But when you stopped he would lift his cold blue eyes to yours, and would repeat in his quavering voice what he longed to tell all the world: that he had no thought but the welfare of France; a France restored and reformed, a Catholic, God-fearing France, a France obedient and moral, a France purged of all traces of the wicked revolution of a hundred and fifty years ago.

He remembered this good-looking and respectful Franco-American, who had so won his heart that he had addressed him as "*mon fils*." "Yes, yes, I met you at Madame de Portes', *que le bon dieu la bénisse!* She was a well-meaning woman, wiser than most of her associates."

When Lanny told the result of his mission, which had been precisely zero, the old gentleman remarked: "No one could have done more." When Lanny said that he had recently talked with Herr Hitler in Paris, Pétain responded quickly: "I have had to trust him, M. Budd; I had no other course. I appealed to him as one front-line soldier to another; but now and then I wonder whether he has the same sense of honour that we guardians of France have been taught. What do you think, *mon fils*?"

This was a question which many Frenchmen asked of Lanny Budd, and his reply had become stereotyped. He said that Herr Hitler was a man of moods, and was swayed by those who advised him. Some of these were narrow-minded racists and nationalists; others wanted much the same thing that conservative Frenchmen wanted, a Europe purged of Red agitators and labour demagogues. "No soup is eaten as hot as it is cooked, *mon Maréchal*, and I have the idea that Herr Hitler's world will turn out to be much the same as you yourself desire."

"France was happiest when it was a land of peasants," declared Henri Philippe Benoni Omer Joseph Pétain. It was one of his favourite themes, and Lanny could assure him that this would be entirely satisfactory to the Führer of the Germans, who wanted to have all the machines in his part of Europe.

A pathetic figure, yearning back to a far-departed age, and buffeted by forces of which he had but the feeblest comprehension. He wanted to use this elegant and cultured American to take his ideas to the New World, and call it to the rescue of the Old. He told about what he called his "National Revolution"; its motto was: "Labour, family, country." He preached this agitated sermon until his voice gave out and he had a coughing spell. When he tried to talk about the Fleet, and the infamy which the British had committed, his hands shook and he broke down, and one of his military aides had to come to the rescue. "I will never give up the Fleet, either to the British or Germans!" And then: "Go and see Darlan; he will tell you." To the aide he added: "Take him to the Admiral."

VIII

The Ministry of Marine was quartered in the Hotel Belgique, and here next morning the son of Budd-Erling presented himself, having received an appointment by telephone. In these offices there were no

crowds and confusion, as in most of the others, for the man at the head was competent and by no means superannuated. He was of Breton descent, Catholic and Royalist, conservative, stubborn, and proud; not so different from one of the English ruling class, who had been his allies until a few weeks ago, and now were . . . what Lanny Budd had come to find out.

Jean Louis Xavier François Darlan was his name, and four-fifths of it was saintly, but he was surely no saintly character, on the contrary a seadog, famous for the amount of brandy he could consume, and for cussing and general devilment. He was a man of medium height, broad-shouldered and vigorous, a fighter born and trained. His life had been devoted to building up the French Fleet according to his own ideas; outwitting the politicians and driving out the grafters, what he called "the golden bellies of the republic." He spoke of it as "my Fleet," and ruled it with a rod of iron.

To the caller he said: "I have met your father, a very competent man."

"You have also met my mother," was the reply, "though probably you do not remember it. You had tea at our home on the Cap d'Antibes not long after the Great War, when you came to Cannes for the graduation of your son at the Collège Stanislas."

"Oh, so *that* Madame Budd is your mother! A most beautiful woman!"

"I have always thought so," smiled Lanny. "I am pleased to have the confirmation of an authority."

So he discovered that there was another Frenchman who could smile. The Admiral was haggard and careworn, but willing to set his problems aside and talk about old times with a caller who was so evidently a man of parts. Said the caller: "I was close to you at another time, without your knowing it. I am a family friend of the de Bruynes, and was interested in the movement which you and they and the Maréchal were promoting several years ago, to get rid of the political riffraff that was ruining France. Doubtless you know that Denis had built a regular pillbox on his estate and had it stocked with machine-guns and ammunition."

"Yes, I once had the pleasure of inspecting it."

"There is a story which might amuse you. One morning about three years ago, the wife of Denis *fils* called me on the telephone, in a state of great agitation. The police had raided the château and arrested the father and were looking for the sons. I was to warn the sons, and also to take charge of some incriminating papers. I did my best; I put the papers in my suitcase, and tried to think where they would be safe from the Deuxième Bureau. It happens that I knew Graf Herzberg of the German Embassy rather well, and had

discussed with him and his associates the best way to promote a reconciliation between his country and yours. I drove out to his home, the Château de Belcour, and demanded his protection. He was greatly distressed—for of course it would have been more than embarrassing if he had been found assisting a conspiracy to overthrow the French Republic. But he couldn't quite bear to turn me out, and I stayed overnight. Next day, after I had read the newspapers, I decided that the scandal would blow over quickly—the politicians of *la salope* had too many crimes on their own consciences to prosecute our friends."

"You diagnosed the situation correctly," replied the Admiral. "If we had succeeded at that time, the history of Europe would have been far different."

"There is one report which I have often wondered about, *Monsieur l'Amiral*: that you had planned to put those officers of the Fleet who supported the corrupt regime on board the *Jean Bart* and take her out to sea and sink her."

"I meant it, absolutely. We could have spared that old battleship, and that kennel full of Red dogs would never have been missed by my service."

"I perceive that you are a commander who knows his own mind," commented the art expert genially.

IX

It was a great day for a collector of inside stories. The Admiral of the Fleet produced his large bottle of brandy and poured himself a swig, which lighted up his piercing dark blue eyes. His visitor took a smaller swig, enough for sociability, and listened while the half-Breton, half-Gascon, told how he had proposed to march an army over the Pyrénées and put an end to the Spanish civil war before it had got fairly started. How different history would have been if that simple and straightforward action had been taken! But *les cochons rouges* had forbidden it; and the same when Russia had begun her attack upon Finland. Darlan had been concentrating upon the building of light units for his Fleet, and had proposed using them to sink or capture all Red merchant ships at sea, and thus force the Kremlin criminals to give up their raid. He had wanted to save Norway by an all-out attack upon the German Fleet and transports on their way to the invasion. He wasn't surprised by it, he said: he had had full information; but in that tragic hour he had been under the command of the British Admiralty, which was one of the reasons he hated them so heartily and used so much fancy profanity when he mentioned them.

The visitor said: "*Monsieur l'Amiral*, my father is deeply concerned as to his course in this crisis, and many of his friends have to make up their minds what attitude to take. I am returning to the States very soon, and influential persons will be asking me: 'What is the programme of the Vichy authorities, and how can we help?' What am I to tell them?"

"Say that I am trying to save France, M. Budd. I am in the position of a driver of an automobile who has his two front wheels hanging over an abyss. My first care is to keep the rear wheels from following, and my second is to get the front wheels back."

"A vivid simile, *Monsieur l'Amiral*!" It was no time for a smile, and Lanny said it gravely.

"I have the Fleet in my keeping, and I intend to guard it. I have been well warned, having seen the dastardly treachery of which my supposed allies are capable, and they will not catch me off guard again. Next time, our sailors will not fire into the air, as they did at Mers-el-Khébir. Also, we serve notice to our false friends that France is not going to be starved. We intend to protect our right to trade; we shall bring food from North Africa, and phosphates, and shall sell them to the Germans, because we have to in order to survive. Our duty is to France, and not to any other nation, or to either side in this war. *La patrie* is going to be restored."

"That is the hope of every right-minded man, *mon Amiral*."

"It will be a different France, I promise you. The Maréchal and I are of one mind on the subject—you have seen that we have buried the so-called republic; both the chamber and the senate have abdicated their power and we are now the French State. That does not mean dictatorship—on the contrary we welcome the aid of every patriotic and Christian Frenchman; but we intend to purge the traitors and the Red dogs—*les cochons rouges*—the men who got us into the vile Russian alliance, a treasonable piece of statecraft which led directly to this war. I assure you that if I can have my way they will pay to the last scoundrel—and I won't waste even one battleship on them; I'll hang them from every limb of the plane trees that shade this hotel."

The visitor gave the assurance: "That reply will be satisfactory to my father and to all his friends."

The rumour had spread on wings of magic that there was an American millionaire in town, wishing to purchase old masters. In times of anguish such as this many persons were in need of cash, and some who had what they thought were valuable paintings wrote letters

or came to call. Lanny went on inspection trips to ancient manor houses, damp and mouldy even in midsummer, with narrow windows whose heavy curtains were rarely drawn back. He was a fastidious judge, and wanted only the best. Most of the time a glance would suffice and he would say; "I am sorry, that wouldn't do. Have you anything else to show me?" Rarely he would say: "What do you ask for that?" When the reply was: "What would you be willing to pay?" he would counter: "It is for you to say what you think the painting is worth. If I agree, I will pay it. I never bargain."

In one of the depressing mansions in which he was glad not to have to live he came unexpectedly upon a Boucher, a characteristic work of that gay and fashionable painter, an artificial-pastoral love scene out of the eighteenth century. His friend and client, Harlan Winstead, had been desiring such a work for years, and in this disturbed time he had authorized Lanny to use his own discretion. Lanny examined the painting carefully, and verified the signature; then he asked: "What is the price?" The reply was: "A million francs," which sounded enormous, until you translated it into ten thousand American dollars. Lanny said: "I am sorry, but that is out of the question." The elderly black-clad lady with the gentle voice and feeble chin looked depressed, and asked for an offer, to which Lanny replied that he feared her ideas were hopelessly out of line with his.

Between looking at other paintings he went to a bank in Vichy and identified himself. In his bank in Cannes he kept a large account for just such emergencies, and this he explained to the Vichy banker. In France people like to see real money, and checks are rarely taken; but from Americans anything can be expected, and for a small commission the banker agreed to make the inquiry by telephone and hand to this elegant and plausible stranger a package containing sixty of those new and crisp ten-thousand-franc notes which the Vichy Government was printing—mostly, alas, for the German conquerors!

With these in a pocket over his heart Lanny returned to the lady in the ancient ivy-grown mansion. It was something he had done probably a hundred times before, in France and elsewhere on the Continent, and rarely had his psychology proved to be at fault. The sight of actual cash was far more effective than talk about it or printed figures in a letter. Lanny said that he had inquired of his American client what he would be willing to pay—and this was literally the truth, even though the inquiring had been done several years ago. Lanny added that his was a generous offer, considering the uncertainties of the time, and that there were no strings attached to it, and no uncertainties; here was the cash, fresh from the bank in the lady's home town, and she might easily call the banker on the telephone and make sure it was real money.

He did not tell her the total, but proceeded to count it out before her eyes. Like a fascinated rabbit's, the eyes followed his hands from one pile to the other; and when he had come to the grand total, six hundred thousand francs, he added as a climax: "And you may keep the frame, which, unfortunately, I have no way to transport." That might seem absurd, but it wasn't; the frame was very good, and it was here, and much bigger than the painting. It was a sort of *lagniette*, as the storekeepers in New Orleans call it, and while Vichy France did not have this custom, it had the same understanding of human nature.

The lady was so worried that the tears came into her eyes; she had to phone first to her brother, and then to the banker. In the end she accepted the offer, and signed the bill of sale which Lanny laid before her. He took the painting out of the frame and rolled it up; it was not too large to be carried comfortably, and he would get an oilcloth cover to keep it safe. He drank a cup of the lady's coffee and listened politely to her stories of the ill behaviour of the refugees who swarmed about her place; then he drove off in his taxi, comfortable in the knowledge that his ten per cent. commission would pay all the expenses of this journey. He sent a cablegram to Harlan Lawrence Winstead, Tuxedo Park, New York, telling what he had; and this was meant not only for the client but for censors and police spies as well.

IX

Gone, perhaps forever, were the happy days when the grandson of Budd Gunmakers and son of Budd-Erling had his fancy sports car, and when *essence* could be bought at any roadside filling station. Lanny had left his car in England, for Rick to turn over to the army; and now every move was a problem—the transporting of a hundred and sixty pounds of man, and perhaps fifty pounds of suitcases, plus a portable typewriter and an old master wrapped in oilcloth. Train travel was a nightmare, for there were literally millions of people who wanted to be somewhere else, and the Germans had taken most of the locomotives and cars of every sort. A bicycle had become the fashionable mode of conveyance, but wouldn't carry Lanny's load. A peasant cart, yes—but it would have taken a week from Vichy to the Cap d'Antibes.

What you did under the circumstances was to consult your hotel porter, whose business it was to know "somebody." "*Oui, oui, Monsieur, c'est possible; mais ça sera très difficile—et très coûteux.*" Lanny replied, "*Oui, je comprends, mon bonhomme; mais il me le faut absolument.*" So presently the functionary reported that he had

found a man who had a car, and could get the necessary permit to buy government *essence*—but at a price fearful to mention. Wherever there are government restrictions, there begins to develop at once a "black market"—because the rich must have what they want, and cannot imagine a world in which money has lost its power. So it was with Lanny Budd; he agreed cheerfully that he would pay seven francs per kilometre for the rental of the car and driver, coming and going; that he would pay one hundred and fifty francs per litre for the bootleg *essence*, both coming and going; also for the driver and *pourboires*. He would pay part of all this in advance to a man for whom the porter vouched.

So in the early morning there drew up before the door a Daimler which had been an excellent car in the year 1923. The driver was one of those homicidal maniacs whom Lanny had seen racing taxicabs about the streets of Paris. How he had got this car he didn't say, and Lanny didn't ask; he listened to horror stories about the flight from *les boches*, and the panic of massed civilians on the roads of France being bombed from the air. Once the man was satisfied that this wealthy American was a friendly listener he proclaimed himself *un enfant de la révolution*, and talked so freely that Lanny wondered if he might not be a member of the left-wing group of which Raoul had spoken.

They rolled southward across the central plateau, past many of those strange round hills called *puy*s, which are extinct volcanoes, often with small lakes on top; and presently they turned toward the east, and came into the wide valley of the river Rhône, familiar to Lanny from earliest childhood. It has been the highway for invading armies since the days of the ancient Romans at least, and if Lanny had had any of those powers of prevision which he so eagerly investigated in others, he might have seen the army of one or two hundred thousand "G.I. Joes" who would be marching up this *route nationale* within four years and as many weeks. But no, Lanny told his chauffeur that he could make no guess whether "Uncle Shylock" would come again to the rescue of Marianne; the majority of Americans had adopted as their political motto "Never again"; and anyhow, it would take them a long, long time to match the Wehrmacht.

They rolled down the slowly descending valley, and had a late lunch at an *auberge* near Avignon. Lanny discovered that his companion had never heard the names of Abélard and Héloïse, and he told the sad story of the priest who had been castrated for making love to a prelate's niece. The *enfant de la révolution* replied: "*Merde!* They should do it to them all!" Lanny decided that it would be no use telling his companion about religious art works in that ancient city.

They took the highway eastward, away from the river, and in due course were on the Riviera, winding through the red Estérel mountains, plainly visible from Lanny's home. He had listened to the story of a Paris street gamin, hating the *flics* and dodging them while committing every petty crime on the police calendar. In return he told about the life of a little boy who played with the fishermen's children on the beach at Juan, and had everything in the world that his heart could have desired. The contrast was glaring enough to require no comment, and Lanny made none, for he was surely not going to reveal his point of view to a man who would go back to Vichy and repeat every word this unusual traveller had spoken.

Instead, he figured up the account he owed and had an understanding about it. In the falling twilight they drove through the blacked-out city of Cannes and along the familiar boulevard leading to the Cap. Here were the gates of *Bienvenu*, and the dogs rushing out barking wildly. Here came José, the lame butler from Spain, and Lanny's mother in the doorway, waiting. He counted out the money, with a bonus for cheerful conversation. Meantime the butler collected the luggage, including the roll of oilcloth, a familiar sight. Lanny got out, and the car chugged away, and that was the end of Lanny's first bootleg journey—by no means the last on this war-torn Continent !

2

Though Every Prospect Pleases

1

FOUR days before the French signed the armistice with Germany, the armies of Il Duce had advanced into the French Riviera and all along the boundary running to the north. Perhaps that was all Hitler would let him have; perhaps the Führer was expressing his contempt for his brother-in-arms, and setting a value upon his services. Or could it be that Mussolini had been afraid of the French Armies, still unrouted in this region? To put it more exactly, was he afraid to reveal to the world how little the common man of Italy was interested in fighting the common man of France, so much like himself?

Anyhow, Il Duce had got only as far as the edge of Monaco, a matter of a few miles; he held that wide strip of French mountains known as the Alpes Maritimes, and could amuse himself building

fortifications in them, or perhaps coming to shoot capercailzie—only he had grown too fat for any sport. Lanny had vivid memories of this district, and of the grouse as big as turkeys which lived in the corests. He had been driven there in boyhood, when his mother had come to visit Marcel Detaze in the army, at the beginning of World War I.

Cannes and the Cap were safe, at least for the present; they weren't going to be Italian and they weren't going to be German, and everybody was pleased. Beauty Budd was one of the few who had refused to worry, for she said that the Italians were very good dancers, and the Germans spoke both French and English, and always they had mutual friends in Berlin and Munich. Really, did it matter very much, so long as people behaved correctly? Mr. Dingle, her husband, said that God was everywhere; and Mr. Armitage, husband of the Baroness de la Tourette, said that the trains would soon be running on time again, and prices would become normal when the discharged soldiers got back to work.

There had never been such crowds in the history of the Riviera. People had come by train and bus and motor car, bicycle and horse and donkey; tens of thousands had walked all the way from Northern France, having but one thought in the world, to get as far away from bombs and shells as possible; they had come until the Mediterranean stopped them. They were sleeping on the ground, on the beaches, in the parks; when it rained they would crawl under any shelter that was near. It was hard indeed to own a beautiful estate like *Bienvenu*, and keep on saying "No" to those whom you called "nice" people, those with whom you had dined and danced and played bridge and baccarat.

Beauty Budd, who had a kind heart, couldn't do it; and the result was that *Bienvenu* had become a village all by itself; guests would come and prove to be permanent—for where else could they go? Both the Lodge and the Cottage were crowded. A scion of one of the "two hundred families" was living with his bride in the studio which Beauty had built long years ago for Kurt Meissner and his piano; the instrument had been spoiled by sea air and was now used for a table and general catch-all. An elderly Belgian diplomat and his wife were camping in the rear part of Lanny's studio, the storeroom which had held the Detaze paintings; these, thank God, were safe in a bank vault in Baltimore, insured for half a million dollars.

All these people had to have food; and poor Beauty would decide that they weren't getting enough, and would invite them to a meal at her own residence, called the Villa. Fortunately she would never lack food, having been *la dame* of this estate for almost forty years. Leese, the peasant woman who had been her cook most of these years,

had more grandnieces and grandnephews than you could keep count of, and they all knew where to get the highest prices for the best of their produce. What else could you do with money these days? Beauty had the best money in the world—American dollars—coming to her all the time, because every once in a while Lanny would sell another Detaze painting, and mention casually in a letter that he had deposited one-third of the amount to her account in a New York bank. Smart people had a saying: it was nice work if you could get it; all Beauty had had to do was to find a painter of genius and marry him, and to take care of him until the Germans killed him.

II

She was afraid that Lanny would be disturbed by all this uproar in the home which had always been his; but he told her he couldn't have stayed in any case, he had to go to London, and then to New York; the war wasn't going to make any difference to him, so far as travelling was concerned. It was difficult to explain this, for it made a difference to everybody else; he had to tell her that he was getting important information for his father, who was engaged in the greatest gamble of his life. You couldn't make planes without materials, and if you bought great quantities, and then the war ended suddenly, you would be sunk. The mother exclaimed: "Tell me, for God's sake!—how long is it going on?"

He had to say: "From all that I can make out, a long time."

"Lanny, I said I couldn't stand to live through another war!"

"I know, darling; but you chose a bad time to be born, and a bad time for your son."

"You're not going to get into it, Lanny!"

"No, I have no heart for it. They will fight to a stalemate, and nobody will gain." That was his role; it was what he told his rich and important friends, including his mother; he was the art expert and merchant of death, never the politician or the tool of such.

"Travel is so dangerous now!" she exclaimed. She was always pleading with him to stay at home and play—surely he had earned the right. It was her dream to find him a wife, and have him settle down in this spot, as lovely as any upon earth, and provide her with more grandchildren, some that would be hers to supervise and to spoil. Surely they had money enough for all! No sooner did Lanny arrive than there would appear at the family luncheon table, or at tea or dinner, some lovely damsel whose family was of social importance somewhere in the world; Beauty would drop hints about it, and Lanny would be his gracious self to the visitor, but afterwards

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Beauty Budd, who had a kind heart, couldn't do it; and the result was that *Bienvenu* had become a village all by itself; guests would come and prove to be permanent—for where else could they go? Both the Lodge and the Cottage were crowded. A scion of one of the "two hundred families" was living with his bride in the studio which Beauty had built long years ago for Kurt Meissner and his piano; the instrument had been spoiled by sea air and was now used for a table and general catch-all. An elderly Belgian diplomat and his wife were camping in the rear part of Lanny's studio, the storeroom which had held the Detaze paintings; these, thank God, were safe in a bank vault in Baltimore, insured for half a million dollars.

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had more grandnieces and grandnephews than you could keep count of, and they all knew where to get the highest prices for the best of their produce. What else could you do with money these days? Beauty had the best money in the world—American dollars—coming to her all the time, because every once in a while Lanny would sell another Detaze painting, and mention casually in a letter that he had deposited one-third of the amount to her account in a New York bank. Smart people had a saying: it was nice work if you could get it; all Beauty had had to do was to find a painter of genius and marry him, and to take care of him until the Germans killed him.

She was afraid that Lanny would be disturbed by all this uproar in the home which had always been his; but he told her he couldn't have stayed in any case, he had to go to London, and then to New York; the war wasn't going to make any difference to him, so far as travelling was concerned. It was difficult to explain this, for it made a difference to everybody else; he had to tell her that he was getting important information for his father, who was engaged in the greatest gamble of his life. You couldn't make planes without materials, and if you bought great quantities, and then the war ended suddenly, you would be sunk. The mother exclaimed: "Tell me, for God's sake!—how long is it going on?"

He had to say: "From all that I can make out, a long time."

"Lanny, I said I couldn't stand to live through another war!"

"I know, darling; but you chose a bad time to be born, and a bad time for your son."

"You're not going to get into it, Lanny!"

"No, I have no heart for it. They will fight to a stalemate, and nobody will gain." That was his role; it was what he told his rich and important friends, including his mother; he was the art expert and merchant of death, never the politician or the tool of such.

"Travel is so dangerous now!" she exclaimed. She was always pleading with him to stay at home and play—surely he had earned the right. It was her dream to find him a wife, and have him settle down in this spot, as lovely as any upon earth, and provide her with more grandchildren, some that would be hers to supervise and to spoil. Surely they had money enough for all! No sooner did Lanny arrive than there would appear at the family luncheon table, or at tea or dinner, some lovely damsel whose family was of social importance somewhere in the world; Beauty would drop hints about it, and Lanny would be his gracious self to the visitor, but afterwards

he would say: "You are wasting your time, old dear! What I need to meet are the people who can tell me things that Robbie will be asking when I see him."

Up in the fashionable hills above Cannes was the estate of Lanny's near-godmother, Emily Chattersworth. Her health was failing, so she had an excuse for not crowding up her place with refugees as Beauty had done; but she had admitted a few carefully chosen friends, and these were persons who, if you got them off in a corner, might tell you the secret clauses of the armistice with Germany, or that with Italy. If her kind and much-loved Lanny were to ask the favour, she would invite some diplomat on vacation or some member of a royal house, who would reveal to him what Spain was up to in Tangier, or how the Fascist intrigue was succeeding in Iraq. Or it might be some great industrialist who knew the status of negotiations with Hitler over the post-war disposition of Lorraine iron ore. It was upon such matters that the peace terms would really depend, and the son of Budd-Erling would say, tactfully and cautiously: "My father is deeply interested in international affairs, as you know; but apart from that, I am a personal friend of the Führer and of Reichsmarschall Göring, and it may be that the next time I see them I can put in a word for your point of view." The important person would know about this art expert's wide acquaintance, for it had been talked about up and down the Coast of Pleasure, and no doubt the wise Emily would have reminded the important person over the telephone when she invited him to call.

III

The poet Heber had written: "Though every prospect pleases, and only man is vile . . ." Lanny looked about him at this landscape, so familiar, so bound up with the memories of all his days. The blue-green water of the Golfe Juan, varying in the shallows and with every change of the weather; the bright blue sky, with billowing white clouds; the red Estérels in the distance, with the sun going down behind them; the grey rocky points with straggly cedars and pine trees growing precariously; the flower-covered fields of the Cap—yes, one might be glad to spend several lifetimes amid this scenery.

But the people! Lanny tried to be charitable, but every time he saw them they seemed worse to him. People who had got money by hook or by crook, and had come here to enjoy their pleasures, at no matter what cost to others and to the human society; the wasters of all Europe, ravenous for their animal satisfactions, for gobbling costly

foods and guzzling rare wines, for copulating on silken couches, for covering their flesh with delicate fabrics and decorating themselves with the furs of animals, the feathers of birds, and gems from the bowels of the earth. If they had been mere animals one would not have been so distressed by them, any more than by the sight of birds picking up bugs or hogs rooting for truffles in the forests; what made them revolting was that it was all the appurtenances of civilization, the symbols of culture they were debasing to their animal purposes. They called themselves elegant, smart, the salt of the earth; they had a score of fancy French phrases for themselves, they were *chic*, *très snob*, the *crème de la crème*; they were the *haut monde*, the *grand monde*, the *monde d'élite*.

They had the means to gratify every fancy; they had the stuff, the mazuma, the long green, the spondulics; in every one of the dozen languages you might hear on this Côte d'Azur they had intimate names for the deity they worshipped, the thing by which they lived, the foundation upon which their culture was built. If you had inherited it from your father and a long line of ancestors, so much the better; but anyhow, you had got it, and you hadn't been caught, so now you could have whatever you wanted, the world was your oyster. You were surrounded by people who were trying to get it away from you, but you knew how to take care of yourself and make them earn what they got. They danced attendance, they bowed before you, they flattered you and licked your boots; they spread out their wares and sang the praises thereof—whether it was food or raiment, music or poetry or painting. Men or women, young or old, black or white, if they did not have the money they were your inferiors and did what you told them, and learned to smile and like it, according to the American slang.

To Lanny Budd, the sociologist, it had been apparent from youth that this was one more case of the decay of a civilization. He had read Volney's *Ruins of Empire*, and knew that this had been going on since the dawn of history, that in truth history had been nothing but that: vast human societies arising and flaunting their glory, certain of their permanence and the favour of their gods, then slowly falling to pieces, like a great tree in a forest, which is attacked by rot, by fungus and parasites and borers, until at last it can no longer sustain its own weight. Was it a doom of nature or of God? Or were there causes of this evil which could be studied and remedies which could be applied?

To Lanny it seemed clear that the trouble lay in the social system; in exploitation and speculation which bred great fortunes, and in inheritance which made parasitism and perpetuated it. Every empire of the past had been based upon the private ownership of land and

other privileges; men enjoyed wealth which they had not earned and power which they were no longer competent to wield; luxury on the one hand and penury on the other bred class strife which tore the society to pieces and exposed it to its foes.

Here it was, history repeating itself; and the extraordinary thing, how few people understood or cared about it. These refugees from a score of lands, including the sweet land of liberty overseas, talked politics and war incessantly, but when you listened you discovered that what they were thinking about was their own comfort, the preservation of the system which made their own lives so easy. What was going to happen to the "market"?—by which they meant the stocks and bonds from which their incomes were derived. If the Nazis won—and nine people out of ten were sure they had already won—what sort of government would they set up in France and how soon would it be before things got back to normal?—by which was meant labour getting back to work and dividends flowing in. Thank God, there would be no more unions and strikes, no more *front populaire* and Red newspapers! And would Hitler wait for a breathing space, or would he go after Russia at once? Such was the conversation of smart society on the French Riviera through this summer of the year 1940.

IV

There are many schools of sociology, also of philosophy; and difference of opinion, which makes horse races, also made discussions in the drawing-rooms of Bienvenu. Here was Beauty Budd's son, who believed that human society had to be reconstructed; and here was Beauty Budd's husband, who was equally sure that nothing could be done to reconstruct society until the individuals which compose it had been improved—or rather, until they had improved themselves. Parsifal Dingle was his unusual name, and he was an Iowa real-estate dealer who had accumulated a modest amount of money and come to live abroad because he wanted to think his own thoughts and couldn't do it in a small town where all the people knew him and were intrusively sociable. Beauty had married him, but had refused to marry his name; she had kept her own, which was really a professional name, she having been what was called a "professional beauty"—and no pun about it.

Parsifal, the man of God, had a rosy cherubic face and hair which had become snow-white since Lanny had known him. He was what was called a "New Thinker," though he gave himself no label; he was interested in everything that went on inside the human mind, or soul, or whatever you chose to call it. He had discovered many

strange things about it, and was sure it was as truly infinite in extent and content as was the universe of the body, to which astronomers can find no limits at one extreme, nor the investigators of physics and electronics at the other. Parsifal believed there was a spirit inside us, something which maintained us, or, as he preferred to say, perpetually treated us; he called it God, but would add, "not God with a beard."

This force was in every person, in everything, indeed it was everything; and we could use it if we took the trouble; we could find out about this creative mental force in the same way that we had found out about electricity—by trying out experiments and seeing what happened. Parsifal was tireless in experimenting, and as a result had made himself into a kind of saint, a kind entirely new on the Coast of Pleasure, not approved by the church authorities who had taken sanctity as their private domain. Parsifal had found that by laying his hands upon people and concentrating his mind upon the certainty of their healing, he could help them to be healed. He did this, so he claimed, by the power of love, and made it his business to love everybody, regardless of whether they deserved it or not, and whether they wanted it or not. Sooner or later, said this man of God, everybody discovers the need of love, and it can be spread by example, just as evil is. Parsifal never argued with people, or forced his ideas upon them; he kept his kindness and serenity, and waited for people to ask him questions, which sooner or later they did.

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of Beauty's cars. Then he escorted the Polish medium to the studio and placed her in the armchair to which she was accustomed; she sat back and closed her eyes, moaned lightly for a minute or two, and then was still. There came from her lips a man's deep voice, proclaiming that it came from Tecumseh, Amerindian chieftain long-since dead; he announced that Sir Basil Zaharoff was there—"the old gentleman with the guns going off all round him." Lanny sighed inwardly, for the munitions king who had been Robbie Budd's partner had become the greatest bore of Lanny's psychic life; he came uninvited and talked at length, and it had been several years since he had had anything of significance to say. He was a great worrier and prophet of calamity; just now he was insisting that Lanny should pay a thousand pounds which Sir Basil had owed to a man in Monte Carlo; but when Lanny asked how he was to get the money, the Knight Commander became vague and faded out.

Then there was announced Lanny's grandfather, Samuel Budd, one-time President of Budd Gunmakers in Connecticut. It had been some time since this stern old Puritan had bothered with his left-handed grandson, who had been shown the light in a Sunday-school Bible class but had refused to follow it. Whenever Grandfather came, it was to issue some rebuke, and now he wanted to know when Lanny was going to give up his idler's way of life and marry again and stay married. The good-for-nothing answered evasively, and in his secret heart was pleased to learn that the old gentleman thought as he did. Lanny surely didn't want any rumours going about in the spirit world that he was a secret agent of Franklin D. Roosevelt, posing as a Nazi-Fascist sympathizer and turning in reports about the doings of the Axis schemers!

The aged merchant of death faded out on a Bible text—nearly always the Hebrew Old Testament, which is full of fighting men and their weapons and war cries. There followed a long silence, and then a gentle old lady's voice with a trace of southern accent: the grandmother of Lanny's friend Laurel Creston. The old lady had been cross with the Budd scion for being what she called a bad influence in Laurel's life; very few seemed to approve of Lanny in the spirit world, and Tecumseh, the "control," was crossdest of all. Now, however, Mrs. Marjorie Kennan, one-time resident of the Eastern Shore of Maryland, revealed that her granddaughter was in New York, and also that this granddaughter was a medium, and could be communicated with directly. The refined and well-mannered "spirit" was fair enough to acknowledge that Lanny had been responsible for this discovery, and she thanked him. Lanny asked how Laurel was getting along, and Mrs. Kennan reported that she was well, and that she was writing all the time but wouldn't tell what

she was writing about; the grandmother tried slyly to find out if Lanny knew, but Lanny could only guess and didn't do that out loud. Instead, he asked how spirits were able to fly from Juan to New York and back again without aeroplane fares; the answer was that there was no such thing as space in the spirit world. When he asked to have that elucidated, he was told that he would understand it when he himself had "passed over." It was a favourite alibi of that other world.

There was nothing evidential in this séance; but Lanny wrote it out, as he had promised his stepfather, because Parsifal insisted that many things which didn't seem evidential at the time might turn out to be so in the light of later developments. Parsifal himself never questioned the reality of the spirits; they fitted in perfectly with his theory that fundamentally all minds were one, and that time and space were illusions of our senses. Thus he encouraged the spirits, and got along in brotherly love with the Iroquois chieftain who shepherded them and interpreted for them with perfect *savoir-faire*. But Lanny could never give up the notion that these communications might be products of the subconscious mind of himself and others. He would argue: "I knew that Laurel was in New York and I knew that she was writing; and Laurel knows all about her grandmother." All the same, it would be interesting to tell Laurel about this séance, and find out if her grandmother's spirit had as yet made an appearance in New York!

VI

These developments were dutifully reported to Lanny's mother, and her reactions had nothing to do with metaphysics. Said Beauty Budd: "Are you corresponding with Laurel Creston?"

"I wrote her a note, to tell her that I expected to be in New York."

"Has she written to you?"

"Mails are uncertain nowadays, and there may be something waiting for me in London."

This was an obvious evasion, and Beauty Budd had been in the world longer than her son, and was not to be fooled by any of his tricks. "Have you had any letter from her at all?"

"Just a brief note, darling, telling me that she was settled and at work. She thanked me for our hospitality, and said that she was writing the same to you."

"I received that note. She is an intelligent woman, and just your sort, I suppose. How much are you interested in her?"

"I am deeply interested in her, both as a writer and a trance

medium; but I'm not in love with her, if that is what you mean." He knew perfectly well that that was what she always meant.

"Lanny, I can't understand you. You are keeping things from your mother, and what is the reason for it?"

"Bless your heart, old dear—you can't understand because you don't want to. I am interested in my work, and not interested in getting married. I tried it once, and discovered that it's all right for those who like it, but not for me."

Beauty had said every possible word there was to say on this subject, but that didn't keep her from saying it all again. Lanny kissed her on her well-rounded cheek and tickled her gently under the ample chin which distressed her when she looked into the mirror. "Why should I want a wife," he demanded, "when I have a mother to tell me everything I need to know?"

Of course no woman is going to let herself be diverted by devices so transparent. "Tell me," persisted Beauty, "are you corresponding with Lizbeth Holdenhurst?"

"I wrote her a sort of bread-and-butter letter, and I've written to her father several times. I've had to, in connection with the handling of the Detaze paintings. I tell him news from Europe that I think will interest him."

"Why don't you write to Lizbeth?"

"Because I don't want to encourage ideas in her mind. I'm not in love with her and I'm not going to be, and she has to understand it and find herself some proper swain in Baltimore."

"Have you ever told Laurel that her cousin is in love with you?"

"Of course not. In the first place, Lizbeth has never told me that she's in love with me——"

"Her father has told you!"

"Yes, but fathers can be mistaken, and anyhow that is their secret. If they want to tell Laurel, it's up to them."

"Does Laurel go to Baltimore, do you know?"

"She didn't mention it. I told her when she was here that I had never mentioned to Lizbeth or her family that I had met Laurel in Germany."

"Why on earth didn't you do that?"

"I was never quite sure what terms the two families were on. Laurel is a sort of poor relation, you know, and the Holdenhursts are very conscious of their wealth and their importance. Laurel's ideas are different from theirs—antagonistic in many ways."

"You mean they would quarrel with her about that?"

"I don't know exactly. Lizbeth Holdenhurst is only a child, but she is a child who has always had her own way, and rightly or wrongly, I've an idea that she'd be upset because I didn't pop the question in

Baltimore. I thought: If she hears that I've been meeting her cousin in Germany and here in Juan, which she thought such a delightful place, she might have the same idea that my own mother has, that I can't try psychic experiments with a woman, or read her stories in the magazines, without falling in love with her. She might be upset and perhaps spiteful."

"She's not at all that sort of girl, Lanny."

"I've learned that girls sometimes surprise you; and anyhow, it wasn't my business. I had the idea that Laurel was in Germany more or less clandestinely, and I wasn't sure that she had told her relatives. She doesn't like the Nazis, and may be writing a book to say so. I had to be careful where I met her for that reason. My general impulse is to let other people manage their own affairs in their own way."

"What a strange secretive person you are coming to be, Lanny! I am worried by the idea that you are up to something dangerous, and are hiding your affairs from me."

"Forget it, old dear!" he smiled. He had thought now and then of taking this shrewd mother at least partly into his confidence; but what good could it do? She did not share his ideas, and would have had a lot of anxiety which it would have been hard for her to conceal from others. Now he said: "I am watching the world, and liking it less and less the more I know it. I am keeping aloof and not making the mistake you are making, of getting involved with people who call themselves my friends and really haven't any idea but to get out of me all they can."

VII

If Lanny had been free to consult his own preferences, he would seldom have gone off the Bienvenu estate. He would have continued his experiments with Madame Zyszynski, and read some of the books in the well-chosen library which had been bequeathed to him. He would have had his piano tuned, limbered up his fingers, and played over again a rich treasury of sound. He would have taken up once more what he playfully called the subject of child study; in the enclosed court of the villa was a charming specimen, eager to be investigated—Marceline's son and Beauty's grandson whom they had named after the painter, Marcel Detaze.

He was half Italian, a quarter French, and a quarter American. His mother was in Berlin, dancing in a night club, and presumably happy with her Junker lover; but tiny Marcel knew nothing about that, and did not miss her. His divorced father, the Capitano, was a Fascist braggart, but the baby didn't know that either, and Lanny

could hope that with wise training and example he might turn out better than his inheritance. He was just two, a delightful age; he raced here and there about the court, stumbling over half a dozen puppies and filling the place with sounds of merriment. Lanny would bring out the small phonograph and put on a record and teach him dancing steps—exactly as he had done for the little one's mother. Just twenty-one years ago that had been, when Lanny had come down from Paris after the Peace Conference which had undertaken to make the world safe for Democracy and instead had made it safe for Nazi-Fascism.

As a result of that, Lanny couldn't stay at home and read old-time philosophers and poets, and play the piano and give dancing lessons. He had to go out into a world of treacheries and corruptions, and make himself the playmate and pal of persons whose ideas and tastes he despised. He had to spend his money upon affording them hospitality. He had to listen to their conversation and cultivate the art of guiding it into channels he desired. He had to be sly as the serpent and watchful as the tiger on the hunt; every word had to be studied, every gesture, every facial expression, and many a time he had known that his life depended upon his shrewdness. For these persons were killers and the hirers of killers—and not merely in Germany and Italy and Spain, their own lands, but here in France, and even before the war had broken out. To turn traitor and menace them could mean not merely death but cruel torture preceding it.

And when, after these fashionable forays, Lanny would come back to the family nest, even then he was not free; even then Duty, stern daughter of the voice of God, controlled his life. Instead of reading Emerson and Plato, instead of playing Chopin and Liszt, he had to shut himself up in his studio and sit staring with blank eyes, going over in his mind exactly what he had heard and making sure that it was fixed in his memory. It had to be right or it was no good at all; and never once in the course of three years as presidential agent had he set down one single memorandum; never had there been on his person or in his luggage or even in his home anything that the Gestapo and the Italian OVRA were not free to peruse and to photostat.

VIII

Just across the Cap, a pleasant walking distance, lived Sophie Timmons, once Baroness de la Tourette and now Mrs. Rodney Armitage. She had a jolly disposition, a loud voice, henna hair which she would not permit to become grey, and most important of all, oodles and oodles of money. It was the Timmons Hardware Company

of Cincinnati, whose advertisements you have seen in the magazines. Sophie's brothers and nephews ran it, and sometimes they came visiting, and when Lanny went to Cincinnati they bought Detazes and other paintings from him. They deposited Sophie's dividend checks in their home bank, and Sophie drew on the account for what she wanted, and it was a lot—for what was the use of having money if you didn't get any fun out of it?

She had been Beauty's friend in Paris before Lanny was born, and she and Emily Chattersworth had kept secret the fact that Beauty had never been married to Robbie and so had never divorced him. They had done it because Robbie had asked them to, and they had been pleased to thwart even partly the old Puritan father in Connecticut who had threatened to disinherit his son if he married an artist's model. So Beauty owed a lot to these older women friends—not so much older, Sophie would insist with a wry face. Lanny couldn't recall the time when her laughter and sharply cynical wit hadn't been a part of his world. Years had passed before he realized that she wasn't the most refined of persons, but even so, he found her good company; and useful, too, for all the world came to her parties, and Nazis and Fascists and Spanish Falangists were not particular whose food they ate and whose wine they drank.

Among Sophie's grandnieces was one named Adele Timmons. She had come on a yachting tour with friends, and had stopped off to visit her great-aunt and been caught by the war. They might have shipped her home on one of the liners, but she liked the Riviera, and shared Sophie's belief that the Italians who had drunk her wine would never be impolite to any of the family. Perhaps also she had listened to stories about the wonderful Lanny Budd who sometimes came visiting at Bienvenu. She was just sixteen, but precocious for her age, a brunette with lovely large dark eyes and a soft, well-rounded figure; she was of a gentle, trusting disposition, and just ready to fall into some man's arms. At any rate, the ladies had that idea, and nothing would have pleased them more than for Lanny Budd to provide the arms.

A month or so previously Adele had stayed too long in the Riviera sun. It is right overhead in midsummer and not to be fooled with; the peasants, who have lived there all their lives, gaze with astonishment at visitors who lie out in it almost naked, broiling themselves to the colour of an overdone steak. Adele had got a case of sunstroke, with high fever and almost coma. Sophie, in panic, phoned for a doctor, and also to Parsifal Dingle, and Parsifal stepped into a little runabout and got there first. According to his custom he put his hand on the girl's forehead and sat there, saying his prayers or whatever he called them, and it happened as it had in a hundred other cases,

the girl opened her eyes and smiled, and in half an hour or so was all right.

That was before the doctor got there, and he would have had to be more than human if he hadn't resented it. Unfair competition—the same idea as the priests had. Parsifal did it in the name of God, but he never took money for it, and so there didn't seem to be anything the objectors could do; the law could hardly forbid an elderly cherub to lay his hand on a girl's forehead—while the girl's great-aunt was in the room watching, with two hands clasped together in terror. If this exemplar of divine love had been willing to accept a fee he could have had anything he asked; but his only desire was that great-aunt and great-niece should learn the lesson that love is the most priceless of God's gifts, and is free to all His children, and that their duty is to practise it and teach it to others who may be ready to learn.

In spite of all that sceptics and cynics can say it is a fact that this attitude is as "catching" as any disease. Adele Timmons came out of that experience convinced that she had met the most wonderful man who had ever lived; her vocabulary being limited, she repeated the statement many times. She gazed at him with awe-stricken eyes, she drank in every word he spoke and remembered it; she resolved frequently that she was going to live that kind of life, and love everybody—the worse they were the better, for that would be a test of faith. She read diligently all the "New Thought" literature he gave her. She came on every occasion to visit at Bienvenu and watch Parsifal give "treatments" to other persons, and now and then receive one herself.

There was nothing unusual about all that; it had been happening to this kindly man of God ever since he had appeared on the Riviera. With him, exactly as with the apostle Paul, "some of them believed . . . and of the chief women not a few."

IX

Such was the situation when Lanny arrived. Even before he had met Adele, as soon as he heard her name mentioned he knew what the two elderly ladies would be planning; he was to be the lucky man who would marry her, and Sophie would give her a generous *dot* and will her a block of Timmons Hardware stock. Many years ago Emily Chattersworth had had the same plan for one of her nieces, and it was devilish awkward, for Lanny had been a ladies' man from boyhood—and these were the ladies! He resolved to be very busy with picture deals, and to have urgent engagements in London and New York, regardless of war. When he went to lunch at Sophie's, he

treated Adele as a child, which, according to etiquette, she was, not having made her debut. He directed his fascinating conversation to the great-aunt, telling about mutual friends whom he had met on his tour. Kurt Meissner, who had lived for seven years at *Bienvenu* and knew Sophie well, had composed a *Führer Marsch* which the German Army had played on its entrance into Paris; Kurt had taken Lanny to meet Hitler in the Hotel Crillon, and later to the ceremony of Hitler's visit to the tomb of Napoleon in the Invalides. Nobody could fail to be interested in such a story—not even a sixteen-year-old miss who had just acquired a religion.

Thus the much-pursued and gun-shy Lanny Budd. He knew the ladies would be disappointed, but they would have to bear it; he was determined not to let them get him into another mess as they had done in the case of Lizbeth Holdenhurst, who had got her cap set at him so firmly that she had caused her father to come and make a proposal. Lanny clenched his hands and resolved that he wasn't even going to look at this girl; he wasn't going to be left alone with her, either outside in the moonlight or inside in any cosy nook; he wasn't going to dance with her, or even go swimming unless others went along.

He was relieved to observe that the girl seemed to fall in with his programme. She flashed him no signals, no downcast eyes or sidelong glances; she behaved as a child, and not as a romantic-minded miss. Beauty, too, behaved better than he had expected; she didn't try to lure him over to Sophie's and she didn't sing the praises of this "catch"; instead she talked some more about Lizbeth. Lanny sensed that there was something peculiar in the situation, but he didn't try to find out; he was glad enough to keep out of it, and his thoughts were concentrated upon finding out the details of the headlong preparations which the Germans were making for the invasion of England.

There was nothing especially secret about that programme, for the Führer himself had announced it to Lanny in Paris, and Lanny had got off a message to President Roosevelt through the American Embassy. Here in Cannes he went to take *eine Tasse Kaffee* at the home of Kurt's aunt, the Frau Hofrat von und zu Nebenaltenburg, an aged *Dame* who had refused to stir from her apartment at the outbreak of war, declaring her certainty that the Wehrmacht would arrive before long. The French had apparently not thought her worth bothering about, and now that the Germans were free to come to the Riviera for their holidays, her home had become a social centre for various dignitaries and their wives. They all knew about Lanny Budd, who had been a visitor at Schloss Stubendorf, to say nothing of Berchtesgaden and Karinhall. He would tell them about the rapid

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spreading of sympathy for Germany in America, and how that man Roosevelt was grabbing rope to hang himself; in return they would discuss the tremendous preparations being rushed in the Fatherland, how landing craft were being built, and barges assembled from all the canals, and motor boats from the inland lakes and rivers. September was the month—*wir segeln gegen England!*—and meantime the Luftwaffe was engaged in knocking the British out of the skies. How confident they all were, and full of gloating! *Der Tag* was every day.

X

Only little by little Lanny came to the realization that his mother was distressed about something. She was unusually silent, she avoided her son, and when he got close to her he discovered that her eyes were red from weeping. He knew her too well to be in any doubt; and after a few days of it he went to her room, shut the door behind him, sat down on the side of the bed, and exclaimed: "Look here, old darling—what is the matter with you?"

He was fully prepared to have her declare that she was unhappy because her first-born and only son wouldn't do his duty to posterity by settling down in Bienvenu and raising a family. He wasn't sure if it would be Lizbeth or Laurel Creston, or possibly Adele; Beauty might have been trying the experiment of letting him entirely alone, on the theory that in previous cases she had irritated him by pushing too hard. But no, it wasn't anything like that; it was something she didn't want to talk about, and Lanny became suddenly worried, for this was just the way his *amie* Marie de Bruyne had behaved before she had admitted that she had a cancer.

He asked if it was Beauty's health. No, it wasn't that; it was something too terrible to be voiced; she began to weep, and he wondered, in sudden horror, if it could be that she had fallen in love with some man other than her husband—she, at an age which she would never speak, but which was getting close to sixty, and with a son who would be forty next November!

"Look, dear," he pleaded, "it's much better to spit it out and get it over with. I've got to know it sooner or later. I've always trusted you and you have trusted me; and did I ever break faith?"

"No, Lanny, but I'm too humiliated! It's so utterly degrading!"

"Yes, darling, but that's all the more reason for telling me. I've got to leave pretty soon, and I surely can't go while you are in serious trouble. Imagine what my thoughts would be!"

"They couldn't be as bad as the reality, Lanny!"

"Maybe not, but they could be pretty bad, and I simply have to know. I'm going to sit here and not move till you tell me."

"Lanny, you'll swear to me you won't say anything or do anything without my consent?"

"Darling, of course. You are a grown-up person, and in the final showdown you're the one who has to decide your fate."

At last she blurted it out. It was indeed terrible, and beyond any man's guessing; a woman's possibly—one of the ideas that tormented her was that the shrewd-eyed Sophie might have got some hint of her humiliation. It was the fact that Parsifal was receiving visits from that girl, and that he prayed with her, and Beauty had seen him with his hand upon her forehead!

"But good Lord, Beauty, he does that to everybody!"

"I know, but not to young girls!"

"Male or female, old or young! Don't you remember he treated Leese's niece?"

"A peasant girl, Lanny; that's not the same as a social equal."

"Darling, everybody is Parsifal's social equal. Don't you remember how he helped a Senegalese soldier, and how the poor devil stank?"

"There's no use trying to fool me, Lanny; this girl smells of the highest-priced perfume she can buy."

"You are tormenting yourself with a fantasy. Parsifal doesn't know that any woman but you exists."

"I thought so, Lanny. But I know men; the old ones especially fall for the young things, and do they make perfect fools of themselves! I have seen it happen to one after another."

"You never knew anyone like Parsifal before, and you are doing your own self a wrong when you suspect him."

"I'm not really suspecting him, Lanny; I would despise him if I did. It's a sudden hatred of all men—and of all empty-headed women. I was empty-headed once, I know. So I hate myself, too. But I never stole another woman's man!"

"Do you think Adele wants to steal Parsifal? She is too young to think of him that way. She probably thinks even I am too old for romance—at any rate she has never made eyes at me."

"That's the most suspicious thing of all! Why shouldn't she be interested in you? It's her business to be looking for a marriageable man, and not for my old one. It's pure vanity—she wants to show me!"

"Darling, you are missing the point, I am sure. Adele thinks she has found a religion."

"Religion, fudge! What girl at her time of life is not looking for

romance? For adventure, even for the thrill of showing a once famous beauty that her day is done!"

"You're surely off in that idea; ask the Catholic Church! They know that Adele's age is just the time to catch them for spiritual devotion. The neophytes have religious ecstasies, they become the brides of Christ, and spend the rest of their lives telling their beads and scrubbing floors in the service of a Heavenly Bridegroom."

Beauty found comfort in those words. She stared at her son and exclaimed: "Lanny, do you really think he is teaching her to be good?"

"I'm sure he is trying to," he replied, "and you ought to know how effective he is; didn't he make a saint of you? Now forget this foolishness, darling, and think of good old Parsifal—how hurt he would be if he had any idea of your suspicions."

"Oh, Lanny, he mustn't know. I must manage to get myself together. I must think up some other trouble, if he asks me why my eyes are red! Don't think me too foolish, Lanny—try to realize my plight! What chance has a woman with wrinkles against a young girl with dimples?"

XI

Lanny went off and thought it over. Surely this was one of the oddest human entanglements he had come upon in a life among odd people. He thought about both parties in the suspected intrigue. He had spoken with vigorous certainty for his dear mother's benefit, but in the secrecy of his heart he wondered: could it conceivably be that Parsifal Dingle, a man in the sere and yellow leaf, was being lured by the dream of budding youth and blossoming beauty, things which he had missed in his own early days in a small unlovely village of the Middle West? Parsifal didn't say much about those days, but Lanny had gathered that they had been barren. All life was barren without God, the healer said, and Lanny could agree with that; but men sometimes find difficulty in making sure what is God and what is Satan.

As for that "young thing with dimples," anything might be true. Sex was written all over her, but that wasn't her fault, it was her time of life. Lanny knew all about it, because Rosemary, now Countess of Sandhaven, had been at just that age when she had taken Lanny into camp, and under her particular tent, so to speak. She had told him all about it, every thrill and shiver, being an unusually matter-of-fact creature, and under the influence of what had then been called the feminist movement, which made it a matter of principle to talk about

everything, and in many cases not about anything else. Adele, so far as Lanny knew, had never heard of such ideas; but she was like a tinderbox, ready to catch fire at the smallest spark. Who could guess what might happen when a divine hand was laid upon her forehead and a divine voice murmured words about universal and all-possessing Love?

Yes, it was a situation to think about. If Beauty should prove to be right in her suspicions, what could she do? Certainly not anything to affront Sophie Timmons or her great-niece; and certainly not anything to wound her husband's feelings. What would probably result would be a flare-up of wifeishness on Beauty's part, a wild impulse to hold her man; but she would be too shrewd to find much hope in this strategy. She would know that if Parsifal could once become "like some other old men," he would find plenty of Adeles to fall for. From now on until the end of her life Beauty would be watching every tiniest sign; and she had the eyes of a hawk when it came to other people's secret thoughts. Her life would become a tragedy—the tragedy of a woman too old to charm a new mate, and too genuinely devoted to her husband ever to want another.

XII

Lanny worried; and a day or two later, passing his mother's door, he heard what he thought was suppressed sobbing. It was mid-morning, and Parsifal was out in the court, reading one of his devotional books. Lanny tapped several times, and more imperiously; finally his mother opened the door and let him in. There she was, with tears streaming down her cheeks, in spite of dabbing with a wet handkerchief. He knew it must be serious this time, and said: "What the devil?"

"Oh, Lanny, the most awful thing!" Then, somewhat contradictorily: "Oh, I am such a fool! You will think I have gone crazy."

"I can't think anything till you tell me what it's all about, dear."

"Oh, Lanny, I had a dream! The most awful dream in all my life!"

"A dream!" he exclaimed, lost in wonder. "You mean you are in this state about a *dream*?"

"But it was so vivid, and so utterly horrible. I can't realize that I am awake. I can't believe that it isn't symbolic, that it isn't a warning. You have told me many times that dreams are sometimes that."

"What was the dream?"

"I found Parsifal in Adele's arms; and Parsifal told me he no

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"What was the dream?"

"I found Parsifal in Adele's arms; and Parsifal told me he no

longer loved me. Then Adele defied me; she said: 'Don't you know that you are an old woman? You are *through*, and he is mine! Mine, mine!' She screamed it at me—oh, the little vixen, the viper! I could have strangled her!"

"I hope you didn't hurt her," said Lanny gravely.

"I woke up before I could do anything to her. I lay there perfectly rigid, numb with horror. I couldn't bring myself to believe that it hadn't happened. It was so real, so paralysing. It was early in the morning, but I didn't dare go to sleep again, for fear of falling into the clutches of that nightmare. Even now, when I tell you about it, I am certain that it happened, that it is a warning; I know that it's real, and that I have been a fool, that I should have acted long ago to stop it—and now it's too late!"

The tears were still flowing; and Lanny thought: "It is becoming an obsession. I've got to tell Parsifal. He is the only cure." There was that modern saint, sitting out in the court thinking Love, with a capital L, and the Power of the Mind over the Body. He really believed in this power, and Lanny did, too. But after you had become convinced, what a bore to keep on repeating it! That was what these New Thinkers did, that was what you had to do if you wanted to make the thing work inside you. You had to keep on thinking it. "Stand porter at the door of thought," Mother Eddy had commanded, and over and over again she had insisted that the mind must hold continuously to the one thought, of God as Love, Life, All. Call it autosuggestion, or self-hypnosis; but they were only names for a power of the mind. Some called it God, and it worked better that way. Lanny could not find any answer to one question: "If God meant me to say prayers all day, why did He give me such an intense curiosity about the outside world?"

Anyhow, there was Parsifal in a shady corner of the court, as contented as the bees and the butterflies fulfilling their routine and never bored by it; and here was his beloved wife shut up in her room, tormenting herself with a dream! "Look here, old dear," said the son, "you've got to snap out of this! You're really driving yourself crazy."

"I know it, Lanny; but I can't get over the idea that this awful thing has happened, or is on the verge of happening."

"It's perfectly obvious that you have simply made a dramatization of your own suspicions. You've got to use your reason and convince yourself that it has no basis in reality."

"That's so easy to say, Lanny; but it only shows you don't know what is in the hearts of women—all women."

"You mean that all women think their husbands are going to be unfaithful to them?"

"When a woman gets to be my age, she discovers something horrible—she finds that men love only youth!"

"I don't agree with you that all men are satyrs; and I think there is such a thing as growing old gracefully. When you were young, you saw other women doing it; you must have realized that your turn would come."

"I suppose I knew it, as a matter of theory; but I never actually faced the idea that I might grow too stout, and then if I reduced I'd be full of wrinkles!"

"You've never been a merely beautiful body. You're nobody's fool, darling, and it's time you used your brains and admitted that you're going to be sixty, and that's different from sixteen. Age has its comforts, too, and its dignities. You can learn things and understand life, as you couldn't hope to do then."

"That's all true, Lanny, and I argue it with myself. But when I face the thought that some younger woman is going to grab the man I love, and leave my home and heart empty, then it seems to me that my life has come to an end. And when I have these horrible dreams—what on earth am I going to do?"

XIII

Lanny didn't really know what to suggest. It helped her to confide in someone she loved, and he was glad he could help her that much. When she exclaimed that it was her own freedom in love that was bringing a harvest of dragon's teeth, he could comfort her by saying that she had never broken up another woman's home. Four men in a period of more than forty years wasn't such a bad record—when it was in Paris and on the Coast of Pleasure. She had had only one of those men at a time, and had loyally served and helped each of them to the best of her understanding. She might have married Robbie Budd if she had been more cold-blooded; but she had known that his family and the family institution of Budd Gunmakers were his ordained life, and if he had been cast off and disinherited he would never have been a happy man and might have gone entirely to pieces.

Then, after some years, when Robbie had decided that it was his duty to marry and raise a family in Connecticut, Beauty had consoled herself with a French painter for whom she had posed. That he had been a man of genius had been a bit of luck, but that he was a wise and kind man, and had loved her truly, was no accident, nor even merely her physical charms, but also her good sense and devoted attention. That was a matter of ten years or so, and when Marcel

had been defaced in the war, she had married him and stuck by him until he died. It hadn't been easy, but she had stood the trial.

A year or two later she had fallen in love with Kurt Meissner, Lanny's friend and boyhood hero. That had been a scandal, because she was so much older than Kurt; but it had been real love, or so they had thought, and Beauty's son thought so too. The facts stood that she had saved Kurt's life, and taken care of him while he became a famous *Komponist*, and that his best work had been done during the seven years he had lived in Bienvenu. Then his country had called him, and he had become a friend of Hitler, and a devotee of the Nazis. That hadn't meant much to Beauty, who did not have a political mind; but he had told her the same thing that Robbie had told her, two decades earlier, that his parents wanted him to marry a young wife and raise a family, and that he felt it his duty to oblige them.

Finally she had chosen this odd marriage, to a man of God whom all her friends had considered to be slightly cracked. But thirteen years had passed, and they had been compelled to love him, willy-nilly—for how can you hate anybody who refuses to hate you? Beauty, after her fashion, had tried to be of use to him, and to accommodate her ways to his. When she had been married to a merchant of death, she had done her best to sell death; when she had loved a painter, she had listened to talk about art and tried to learn what the strange words meant; when she had been the wife of a *Komponist* she had listened to his compositions and praised them in the German language. So now she read New Thought literature, and was sure that she was becoming spiritual, and said that she was no longer concerned to be fashionably dressed, and to meet smart people and play cards for high stakes; but of course she only partly meant it, and couldn't practise it too strenuously—because that would have hurt the feelings of her smart friends!

XIV

Lanny went off thinking about dreams. What an extraordinary phenomenon, that we should abandon control of our minds, and that they should go tearing off like an automobile without a driver, like the screws of a steamship "racing" when a wave passes and they come out into the air. Someone has remarked that we are all insane for one-third of our lives; and here was the subconscious mind of Beauty Budd, taking her imagined troubles and weaving them into an elaborate web of fiction which might bring her close to real insanity.

In Lanny's own mind something hardly less freakish had been going on; he had manufactured for himself a recurrent dream—a dream

about China, everything in China, camel trains with bells, pagodas with gongs, city streets with rickshaws, and crowds shuffling along in straw sandals and padded cotton garments. Lanny had seen pictures of such scenes, both in books and on the screen, but he had no special interest in that remote land, and no thought of going there. But several years ago in Munich an astrologer had cast his horoscope and told him that he was fated to die in Hong-Kong. Lanny had no particle of belief in astrology, nor in the integrity of this sharp-witted young Rumanian; but something in his subconscious mind had picked up this theme and proceeded to make up stories about it. As a result, one interesting method of tapping the subconscious mind had been quite spoiled for Lanny; he no longer amused himself looking into a crystal ball, because all he saw there was a Cook's tour of the land of Cathay.

What was to be done about Beauty's dream life? The son thought that it would be an interesting case for a hypnotist; put her into a trance and tell her that she would never again believe any evil about her husband! But it isn't so easy to hypnotize a person who knows you as well as your mother does; and Parsifal of course was out of the question to perform his service.

A couple of days passed, and fear was still written on Beauty's usually placid face; her smiles when her husband was present were so forced that to Lanny they seemed like grimaces. Then one morning the phone rang, and Lanny, in the living-room, heard his mother answering in the hall. "Oh, hello, Sophie," and then a silence, and: "Oh, dear me! Is there anything we can do?" Then: "Well, tell her good-bye for us. She is a lovely child."

The wife of Parsifal Dingle came into the room with a face of rapture: the expression of the man who coughed up the alligator. "Lanny! Adele is going home!"

"What for?" The thought flashed over him: had Beauty appealed to Sophie in her distress?

But no! "Her father has cabled. The mother has been hurt in an automobile accident. Adele is to take a plane from Marseilles by way of the Azores. Her father has made the arrangements."

Tears of delight, of utter bliss on the features of Beauty Budd! "Oh, Lanny, nobody can ever tell me that God doesn't answer prayers!"

Lanny couldn't restrain a burst of merriment. "Tell that to Adele's mother, old dear!"

3

This Sceptred Isle

I

LANNY BUDD was an American, and therefore a neutral, a privileged position in this war. He wanted to travel to England, and the route lay through Spain and Portugal. From Lisbon it would be easy, because as the son of Budd-Erling he was important to the British; but he could hardly expect that to help him with the Vichy French or their Nazi overlords. He could have got help from Laval or Pétain, but that would probably have come to the attention of the British and wouldn't have sat so well with them. Better to put his trust in that universal world power which knows no boundaries and no sympathies; "bright and yellow, hard and cold—gold! gold! gold! gold!"

Lanny called upon his friend Jerry Pendleton; good old Jerry who had been his tutor a quarter of a century ago and his tennis partner ever since; a lieutenant from World War I, and now the owner of a travel bureau in Cannes. There wasn't much travel nowadays, but Jerry's little French wife owned half a *pension*, and that enabled the family to eat. For a matter of two decades Jerry had had an excuse to go fishing with Lanny Budd—they were providing food for the boarders. One of these had been Parsifal Dingle, so that Lanny had been fattening his future stepfather and psychic collaborator without having any idea of it.

Now he had only to say: "I want to fly to Madrid, and it's worth whatever it costs." Jerry would charge only the regular commission, and would know the right *douceur*—sweetener—to pay to clerks and officials who were on fixed salaries while the cost of living went up day after day. So it would come about that persons who had been clamouring for bookings would go on clamouring, while Lanny Budd would get a place on the next plane from Cannes to Marseilles, and from there, with only a few hours' delay, on a plane to Madrid. By an extra payment he could take not merely himself but his suitcases and his portable typewriter and his precious roll of painting.

He had visited Madrid during the previous winter, the period of the so-called *Sitzkrieg*, the "phony war." Marshal Pétain had at that time been the French Ambassador to Spain, and the Nazi agents had been bamboozling him with talk of gentlemen's agreements,

precisely as they had bamboozled Prime Minister Chamberlain in Munich a little more than a year earlier. To Lanny Madrid had seemed the most desolate of capitals. The Nazis, with all their crimes, were at least efficient and put up a fine show; whereas Franco was nothing but a little wholesale murderer in the cause of his medieval Church. He didn't even know how to repair the buildings he had smashed in the course of three years of civil war, and they stood there, gaping wrecks open to the sky. The Germans, who wanted his iron ore and copper, had to come and supervise the getting of it, the only means of collecting the huge debt due them for having set the Caudillo on his throne. He had two or three million of his people in prisons and concentration camps; shootings went on night after night, and famine stalked the streets of the great metropolis. On the stairs of the subway swarms of miserable, half-starved child bandits clamoured to sell you lottery tickets and filthy postcards.

The landlords and the ecclesiastics—often the same persons—had won their war, and were prosperous and fat as always through the centuries. Lanny did not need to enter their palaces and ask questions, because he had got it all in Vichy and Cannes. He knew that Hitler had Franco's written permission to march through Spain whenever he felt strong enough to take Gibraltar; he knew about the arrangements for Il Duce to send the bombing planes, and about the submarine refueling system from Spanish ports.

II

By train through the desolate countryside, part of it barren, part wrecked by war, and on to Lisbon, which had become the spy centre of Western Europe. The dictator who ruled this little country couldn't be sure which side was going to win, and he shrewdly played each against the other and raked in the cash. In his capital was the same contrast of riches with bitter poverty; you could buy costly perfumes stolen from the shops of Paris, and you could see barefooted women carrying huge loads of farm produce upon their heads. Nowhere could you escape the sight of German "tourists" wearing golf costumes, and if you talked in any café on the swanky Avenida da Liberdade, you might discover several persons trying to overhear what you said. Uniforms were everywhere, and of all colours; it must be that the officers of Portugal's small army designed their own, and so gaudy that you could imagine yourself on the stage of an operetta.

Lanny wasn't interested in talking to anybody in Lisbon, for in neutral countries he was a neutral and not desirous of attracting

attention. There were great transport planes flying regularly to London, and others to Berlin from the same airport; this was a convenience to both sides, and as a rule they were not attacked. Reservations were beyond price; but Lanny was Budd-Erling, and his father had spoken for him; all he had to do was to send a cablegram to his father's solicitors in London, and three days later he boarded a plane at the crowded airport.

The start was at dawn, and the journey was supposed to take six hours; the passengers sat in their seats and dozed if they could. When their watches told them the time was longer, and a strange leaning in their seats told them that the plane was circling, they became anxious, and were informed that the Croydon airport had just been bombed and repairs were being made. It was impossible to see anything, because the windows of the plane had been covered with boards, held in place by suction cups—presumably so that no one might observe the elaborate defences being constructed all along the coasts of this sceptred isle, this England.

When at last they touched the ground it was daylight, and there was a badly wrecked hangar still burning, and a landing field spotted with craters. No chance to see more; they were loaded into a bus and hurried off to London, a journey interrupted by road blocks and tank traps every mile or so. This time the windows were not blacked, and you could see how the fields of Southern England had trenches dug across them, and logs, carts, cast-off motor cars, and other obstructions to make trouble for planes and gliders that might drop down in the night. Lanny was astonished to see how much of such defence work had been done since his last visit; also by the number of bomb craters, even in the open fields. Home Guardsmen were active everywhere.

III

He had got a reservation at the Marchester, which was fortunate, for so many people had been bombed out that the hotels were crowded. He ordered toast and coffee, orange juice, and eggs—the rich could still have these luxuries. He arranged to have his clothes pressed—one of the primary duties of a gentleman of elegance. Clad only in his shorts on a hot morning, he set up his little portable and set to work on his report.

It went fast, because he had been over and over it in his mind, week after week; everything that he had learned in Vichy and on the Riviera: the French Fleet, and the armies in French Africa and Syria; Franco and what he was doing and planning; the German prepara-

tions for invasion, and the activities of their agents in Unoccupied France. Lanny used as few words as possible, for he had always in mind the stack of documents and reports he had seen on the reading table of his Chief at every visit; but he had been told to cover everything, and he did not spare even the American agents who were in Vichy, and whose trail he had been interested to follow. Mr. Robert Murphy, tall, partly bald career diplomat, was in Vichy presumably because he was a Catholic, and so could speak the language of Holy Mother Church, which claimed in the name of Almighty God the exclusive right to dominate the souls of men and women, to educate their children, and to be in all ways superior to the temporal state. The Holy Mother had got what she wanted in Franco Spain and now in Vichy France; and what was a free American to make of it?

Lanny made no carbon copy of his report. He sealed it in an envelope which bore no marks, and addressed it: "Personal to the President. Zaharoff." That was the code name which F.D.R. had assigned to him; a name pretty well forgotten now, and borne by no one else, so far as Lanny knew.

Lanny put the sealed envelope in another and larger one, and addressed this to "The Hon. Joseph Kennedy, U.S.A. Embassy, Grosvenor Square," and marked it "strictly personal." The Hon. Joe had instructions that the inner envelope was to be forwarded by diplomatic pouch, which, of course, always went by air. Since Lanny could never tell when a pouch might be leaving, he went out and found a taxicab, and watched from the window while the driver delivered the missive at the Embassy door. The passenger did not ride back to the hotel, but paid off the taxi and walked. By such elaborate precautions he had in the course of three years managed to send close to a hundred reports, and without slip-up so far as he knew.

IV

Next Lanny went to the police station. You had to register now and explain your business, just as on the Continent. They gave him a "ration book," but he never once had to use it, because he ate at restaurants or with friends. The first of these he sought was Eric Vivian Pomeroy-Nielson, left-wing playwright and journalist, Lanny's contact with the anti-Fascist world in Britain. They had last parted amid the confusion of Dunkirk, and had not seen or heard from each other since. Now Lanny called the home, which was in Bucks, and asked for Rick's wife; he did not give his name but said: "This is Bienvenu," and the reply was: "Rick is in town; he has taken a job on the *Daily Clarion*." No more than that, for since Lanny had

pretended to join the camp of the near-Fascists, he had never visited The Reaches, and his meetings with Rick and Nina were a carefully guarded secret. Lanny called the *Clarion* office and said: "Bienvenu"—nothing more. Rick answered: "I'll come."

They had agreed upon an obscure hotel where neither was known. Lanny went there and got a room, and his friend came. And what a time they had, swapping stories and news! Lanny was free to tell everything, except the single fact that he was a presidential agent; whatever Rick could use without pointing to Lanny as the source was all to the good from the point of view of both Lanny and his Boss. Rick had joined the staff of a labour paper because he couldn't stay at home in this crisis; he wanted the workers of his country to know what the war meant to them, and what would be their plight if the "appeasers" could manage to have their way one more time.

To Rick it was one conspiracy throughout the world. The holders of privilege had hired gangsters to protect themselves against social revolution, and that was the meaning of Fascism, National Socialism, Falangism, and all the different "shirts," black, brown, green, white, gold, silver. Always the clubs and daggers and revolvers had been purchased with the money of the great landlords, the owners of mines and mills, the holders of patents and paper titles which enabled them to levy tribute upon the toil of nations and empires. Rick's mind was a catalogue of these people and the corporations and cartels they had set up; because he knew their economic motives, the sources of their income, he could foretell what they were going to do, and when they had done it he could explain why. He held them guilty of ten million murders, and this World War II was but one episode in their struggle to buttress their power.

Lanny told how he had met the German Army in Dunkirk, and had got through to meet Hitler and Göring, Kurt Meissner and Otto Abetz, and the rest of his Nazi friends; he told how several people in Paris were making their peace with the Nazis. In Vichy it was somewhat different—the leaders there hoped to preserve their Catholic culture, and to have a Church Fascism like Franco's; but at Nazi command they were having to persecute the Jews, and were hunting out the refugees, the Reds and the Pinks of every shade, the liberals and democrats, everybody of whom the Nazis had ever heard, and who might by any chance speak a word against them. "You can't imagine how it feels to live in Vichy France," Lanny said. "You can't find out anything but what the regime wants you to know; you can't even find out what the laws are—there are so many new decrees, and not paper enough to print them. You have to stand on a street corner and read the *affiches* in order to know what you're forbidden to do."

V

Were the Germans going to try an invasion of Britain? That was the question everybody talked about, not merely on this island but all over the world. Lanny told what Hitler had said, that he was coming as soon as he was ready. But did he mean it? Would he have said it if he had meant it? "He is a strange semi-lunatic," Lanny opined; "cunning wars with vanity in his soul, and it would be hard for him to forgo the glory of announcing what he was going to do. He will come if his generals do not oppose it too strenuously."

Lanny was one who had a right to be informed, and his best and dearest friend withheld nothing from him. England for twenty miles back from the coast had been declared a military zone, and day and night labour was turning it into one vast fortification. Every beach was mined, and covered with a tangle of tightly strung barbed wire; there was hidden artillery of all sizes, and no end of pillboxes with machine-guns, carefully camouflaged. There were great railway guns which could be rushed from place to place. Most important of all, the period of the *Sitzkrieg* had been utilized to devise and install a series of pipes extending out under the sea, connected with oil tanks and heavy pumps. In case of an invasion attempt, oil would be poured out in floods; it would rise to the surface, and there was a magnesium device to ignite it, so that the invaders would find themselves caught in an inferno of flame. And even when they came to the shore, they would find the beaches ablaze, and flame-throwers concealed behind garden hedges.

Rick told about the situation he had discovered on his return from Dunkirk. Tanks, artillery, trucks, machine-guns, all the costly equipment of an army of two or three hundred thousand men had been lost in Flanders; the Germans had it, and the British had only one fully equipped brigade to defend their shores; troops guarding the beaches had to be armed with shotguns, sporting rifles, even muskets out of museums. "Your President saved us," declared the baronet's son. "Have you heard what he did?"

"I didn't see an American or British paper till I got to Lisbon."

"This hasn't been published yet, that I know of. You had a million World War I rifles in your arsenals, and Roosevelt had them loaded onto fast steamers and sent over to us. They are out-of-date, but they saved us once and might have done it again. He's been letting us buy some torpedo boats and other small stuff that your navy can spare. They are sold to private dealers who resell them to us; that's according to your laws, it appears."

"It wouldn't appear so well during an election year," was the reply.

"I know, I know," said Rick. "You have about a hundred

over-age destroyers, left from the last war. We need them the worst way in the world, to keep our convoys on top of the water. We're trying our best to buy them, so the Pater tells me. Put in a word for us, if you meet anybody with influence."

"I'll do that, you may be sure. But tell me this, old man—what are you going to do if the Germans do succeed in breaking down the door?"

"We'll fight inside the house, of course; we'll fight to the last man."

"I know, but that won't help much; civilians can't fight a modern army. I'm going home, and my father will ask me questions; some of his friends are influential, and their decisions may make a lot of difference to you. Suppose these islands are conquered—what will the Fleet do? Will the Germans get it, or will it come to Canada as Churchill promised?"

"The Pater has talked with members of the Cabinet about it, and they say there has been a formal vote. We'll do another Dunkirk—put our fighting men on board every sort of ship we can get together, and the Fleet will escort them to Canada. We'll fight from there, and come back home some day. My understanding is, we have already given that promise to Roosevelt in writing; and we've taken the first step by shipping every ounce of gold in the Bank of England's vaults to New York and Montreal and other places of safety. That was quite an adventure, believe me—and it's strictly hush-hush!"

"It's the best news I've heard in a long while," declared Lanny. "My father will sleep better when he gets it."

"What I want you to send me back," replied the Englishman, "is the dope regarding Roosevelt's chances of re-election. What do you know about this fellow Willkie?"

"I never heard his name until I read a three-line dispatch in *l'Éclaireur de Nice* saying that the Republicans had nominated him. The Continent isn't allowed to know about American political affairs. Even the Swiss papers are not allowed into Vichy France any more."

VI

Lanny inquired about the family, whose home he had visited so often in youth and early manhood. Sir Alfred had taken a desk job in the Local Defence Volunteers; he was old, but so long as his strength held out he would set free some younger man. Nina, Rick's wife, was running the home, and the women of the neighbourhood came to roll bandages in their spare hours. The two girls were training to be nurses, as their mother had been in the previous war. Young Rick, the younger son, whom Lanny remembered as a long-legged schoolboy, was training with the Air Force, following in the footsteps

of his adored older brother. Alf, lieutenant in the R.A.F., was down near Dover, the hottest spot this side of hell, his father said. "We haven't seen him for a couple of months."

"I suppose they're on call day and night," the other remarked.

"You can't imagine the tension, Lanny. They sleep with their boots on, and when the siren sounds they leap into their flying suits and dash to the planes. There are so few, and everything depends upon them."

"You said they would prove to be better than the Germans. How is it working out?"

"Well, they're outnumbered six or eight to one, and they have to get several of the enemy for every one they lose. The figures aren't given out, of course; but Alf says they are holding their own."

"My heart goes out to Nina," remarked the visitor gravely.

"It's rugged, but not so much so as you might think. There comes a point where you can't suffer any more, and you stop. Alf is credited with five Luftwaffe planes and so far he hasn't been hit, but that can't go on forever; nobody has an unlimited drawing account in the bank of luck. Some day there'll come a telegram. Alf is married, by the way."

"You don't tell me!"

"Right after he came back from the Dunkirk circus; to Lily Strawbridge, the family just down the river from us; you may remember them."

"Very well indeed."

"A fine girl; and she has just learned that she is pregnant. So Nina will transfer her affections. That's the way it goes in wartime. This generation has to be written off; at any rate the airmen."

Lanny thought for a moment, then said: "I think I should have a talk with Alf before I leave. Do you know if he has had anything to do with the Budd-Erling?"

"He has tried one out."

"Well, my father will have a hundred questions to ask. Nothing can take the place of actual battle test."

"I'll see what can be done about it. You're going to Wickthorpe, I suppose."

"That is my plan. How are they?"

"I don't see that family any more. They wouldn't relish my conversation. I've heard a rumour—it may or may not be true—that his lordship is thinking of resigning from the Foreign Office."

"Good grief!" exclaimed the American. "What would that mean?"

"I rather fancy he's been a fish out of water for a long time, and he can't have been entirely happy."

"Irma will tell me about it, I imagine."

"Don't you tell *me*; I'll get the story myself and be free to publish it—unless you prefer that I didn't."

Lanny thought for a space. "It might be better if you left that particular scoop to somebody else, Rick. Everybody thinks of me as Irma's former husband, and many of them have not forgotten that I used to be your friend. After all, it's not an important story—not so much so as some of the things I can get if I keep my appeaser sympathies untouched by suspicion."

"Righto!" said the playwright. "I'll spare the mother of your child, and you find out for me how much truth there is in the report that Hitler is making another peace offer through Eire, and that he's holding off the invasion to give us time to think it over."

"What I've heard," replied Lanny, "is that negotiations are going on in Spain. Both may be true. God help us!"

VII

Lanny telephoned to Wickthorpe Castle, as courtesy required, to ask whether it would be convenient for him to pay a visit to his little daughter. Irma answered: "Certainly; but, Lanny, there are so many people wanting to get out of London, I had to let some friends have your cottage. Would you mind using Mother's spare room?"

"Of course not," he replied. "I can't stay very long, and I'd be ashamed to keep a whole cottage empty in times like these."

He took the train, and a pony-cart from the Castle met him at the station. His lovely little daughter was in it, some three months older and perhaps half an inch taller than when he had seen her last; eager to greet him and to ply him with questions, and to tell him about her own adventures. War might be hell for a flying man, but it had its compensations for a child: so many things going on, so many changes in routine, so much news. The poor little rich girl named Frances Barnes Budd was ten years old, and more things had been crowded into her life in the past year than in all the previous nine. And now came this handsome and delightful father who had been in Paris and seen the conquering German army, and met the dreadful wicked Führer—Frances had to be taught that he was wicked because everybody else on the estate and in the village believed it, and she had to be a patriotic little English girl, even though her father and mother were both Americans. Lanny, skilled at playing roles, had to play two at the same time in this ancient remodelled castle.

After the little one had gone reluctantly to bed, he was shut up in the privacy of the library with his former wife and the wife's new husband; a strictly modern situation, never before heard of or

imagined in these ancestral halls. Irma's divorce had been got in Reno, Nevada; and within a half-century an English earl had been sentenced by his peers to six months' imprisonment for putting his trust in that variety of escape mechanism. But this time it was the woman who had got the unshackling; and here she was now, living in what her Church called adulterous relationship; but all the same, the rector came to tea and the curate played bowls with his lordship on the green.

"We mustn't quarrel," Irma had said, "if only for Frances' sake,"—and Lanny had agreed with her. Some of their friends thought they couldn't have been very much in love, or they wouldn't have taken their parting so easily. Apparently their friends would have thought it a sign of true love if they had thrown the dishes at each other's heads, or made a scandal in the newspapers; perhaps even if Lanny had strangled Irma, or if she had put poison into his coffee. That had been the old-fashioned way; among the portraits in this ancient castle was one of a black-whiskered military earl who had hurled his unfaithful wife down the great stairway and broken her neck. At least, that was the way tradition had it; he had said it was an accident, and there was no law that could contradict him. That kind of marital solution made tremendous Elizabethan drama, but it didn't appear so well suited to everyday use.

Irma was now a countess, and that was what she wanted; that was the way she got something for her money. As the wife of Lanny Budd she had got little, because Lanny didn't respect money, indeed flouted it openly; he couldn't see that it was any fun to spend great sums entertaining a swarm of people who didn't care a hang about you and would have snubbed you on the street if you had gone broke. But now as Lady Wickthorpe, Irma had a whole community in awe of her and treating her with ceremony. A handsome brunette woman of thirty, quiet and dignified in manner, she went about with the blue-eyed rosy-cheeked lordship at her side, knowing that everything was exactly right. If now and then she found him slightly dull, she wouldn't admit it even to herself. She had borne him two sons, and thus had settled her obligation to the British peerage; the fact that she had a child by a previous marriage and that the father of this child came visiting was taken by the Wickthorpe villagers as an Americanism.

VIII

What Lord and Lady Wickthorpe were doing now was trying to save civilization; their own phrase, and they were in deadly earnest about it. Lanny had known "Ceddy" since boyhood, when he had

been a viscount; he had always been serious-minded, and talked a lot about duty to the "Empah." Now he said: "This war is the most tragic blunder in our hist'ry." His wife's usually so placid face wore an expression of pain as she added: "The most cruel and wicked thing!" A woman thought more about the human side of it: the young men going out and not coming back, the homes being blown into rubble, the women and children buried beneath them.

"We must find a way to stop it," continued his lordship. "We are simply throwing away our heritage; we are turning all Europe over to a band of Asiatic barbarians."

That was the point of view of a large group of British aristocrats, industrialists, men of affairs; even after Dunkirk there were many who felt sure in their hearts that nobody could benefit from this war except Stalin. They pictured him in their imaginations, the Caucasian despot, gloating over the blunder his capitalistic foes were committing; he sitting back watching, getting ready to leap in at the end, when the other nations had completely exhausted themselves. "There are two great civilizations in the world, the Anglo-Saxon and the German," declared Caddy; "and these two are going to destroy each other's cultures and leave the world to the lesser breeds. Surely Hitler must see that as well as we!"

"He does see it," responded Lanny. "He has set it forth in practically the same words. The problem is, how to get the two sides together."

This couple knew no one else who was in position to meet the top-flight Nazis at the present time; so now they proceeded to cross-question him and to drink in every word. Numbers One, Two, and Three—Hitler, Göring, and Hess—they had come to Paris for the victory parade and Lanny had talked with them. They were all in agreement, they had no quarrel with Britain, no claims against the British Empire; they wanted nothing but a free hand in Eastern and Central Europe, a part of the world in which the British had no proper interest and no right to interfere.

Hitler had said it over and over in his speeches; he had assured Lanny that he was willing to get out of France—except perhaps Alsace-Lorraine; he was willing to help restore Belgium and Holland and Norway, which he had been compelled to take, partly by the accident of geography and partly by British intrigue. Hitler was sure that he could invade Britain, but he didn't want to, and couldn't understand why the British ruling classes failed to appreciate the service he had done them in putting down the Reds throughout the greater part of Europe—to say nothing of his offer to invade the culture's nest in the east and smash it once for all. Hitler had said: "Poland? *Um Gottes Willen*, how did we come to get into a war over Poland?"

Poland is a pigsty; Poland stinks! You British tell the Americans that you believe in democracy; you don't, of course, but even if you did, what has that to do with Poland, a dictatorship of landlords and colonels? Poland is the breeding-place of the typhus-carrying louse!"

It all seemed so simple to the Wickthorpes and their little coterie. They weren't pacifists, but they wanted to fight the right war, and when they knew they were fighting the wrong one, they begrudged every drop of British blood, every dead Tommy or officer, every home that was bombed, every factory and shipyard and oil-tank and whatnot. They grieved for the Germans almost as much as for themselves; they were quite sure that if the Nazis had been treated with tolerance and consideration they would have developed the same conservatism as British statesmen. "You know we were pretty rough on ourselves in the old days," remarked Caddy, who liked to read hist'ry. "Building an empah is never a milk-and-water proposition. Take Clive for instance—or, for that matter, Cecil Rhodes." He was talking to an old friend, and could speak frankly.

Lanny reported on Pétain and his regime. A humiliating position they were in, but they had got into it by their own bad judgment, declared the noble earl. There was no need for England to do the same; nothing of the sort was desired by Hitler, and to say otherwise was merely the trickery of demagogues, of Reds open or camouflaged. Britain and Germany should be friends; they should define their separate interests and recognize each other's right to live and grow; the world was big enough, but not big enough to support war. There should be an armistice at once, then a frank discussion and settlement. Churchill, of course, would have to resign. After Lanny had told all he had learned about efforts being made to this end, Caddy went into detail about Hitler's proposals through his agents in Eire and Spain. Something was surely coming out of these dickerings, declared his lordship.

IX

Lanny waited for the couple to bring up the delicate subject which Rick had mentioned; and sure enough, Irma remarked: "Caddy is thinking of resigning, and we both of us wonder what you will think about it."

"You surprise me," responded the secretive one. "Won't you be sacrificing a lot of influence?"

"We don't think so, Lanny. It is impossible for us to function under the present Cabinet."

"I know that permanent officials aren't supposed to have anything

to do with policy, but I have always felt certain that Caddy was finding ways to make his influence felt."

"That used to be so, but the time appears to have passed. Churchill dominates everything, and no one dares lift a voice in opposition. He really believes that he can win this war; he means to try, even if he wrecks all Europe."

"A man who is prey to his hatreds, I fear. But as to Caddy, I am troubled to see him giving up the career that has meant so much to him. Won't you miss your daily routine, old man?"

"I was happy in it so long as I thought I was accomplishing something; but I no longer feel that, and it irks me to take the orders of wrong-headed men."

"But take the long view, Caddy! Times will surely change."

"My reading of our hist'ry convinces me that in the long run an Englishman does not suffer politically from following his conscience."

"Take the case of Ramsay MacDonald," put in Irma. "He stood out against the last war, but after it was over he became Prime Minister." Irma was too young to remember those events, but she, too, had been reading hist'ry—or at any rate listening to it in her drawing-room.

Lanny might have replied that the Scottish idealist had resigned because he stood to the Left, whereas the Earl of Wickthorpe stood to the Right, and that made all the difference in the political world. But it wasn't Lanny's role to suggest ideas of that sort. Instead he remarked: "I shall miss the inside view of things which you have given me."

"I don't think it will make much difference in that respect. There are others who share my point of view, even though they don't feel free to act upon it. They will keep me informed."

"What does Gerald think about it?" That was Gerald Albany, a colleague in the Foreign Office whom Lanny had often met at Wickthorpe and in London.

"He agrees that it's all right for me, but for various reasons he doesn't care to join me. I am in a peculiar position, as you know, on account of my rank. I had no business to be a civil servant."

Said Lanny: "I've always appreciated your devotion to the public welfare. Are you going to make a personal issue of your resignation?"

"Irma and I are in agreement that it isn't the time for that. My resignation will speak for itself. I'll retire to this place and become a country squire for a while—Britain will need food as much as guns."

"But you won't give up your activity on behalf of peace!" exclaimed Lanny anxiously.

"We shall do what we can in a quiet way to spread an understanding of the situation and to counter the intrigues of the wild men.

We count upon you to bring us news from America, and from the Continent, if you are able to travel there."

The wife put in, anxiously: "Do you think the decision is wise, Lanny?"

"On the whole I believe I do. After all, a Foreign Office job is a routine one, and there are many men who can fill it. It is a humiliating job for a man of Ceddy's station and ability; his friends have known that for a long time—I have heard several say it. As a member of the House of Lords his words and example will count for more than he realizes. He might be the man to name the Prime Minister and determine the policies of the Government."

Really, it was a shame to play with Irma that way. Lanny knew her so well, it was like tempting a child with candy. From earliest childhood she had been taught that she was a person of tremendous importance, because of the fortune of J. Paramount Barnes, utilities magnate who had killed himself gaining it. Quite literally, Lanny doubted if Irma had ever even heard of the idea that her money didn't constitute her a privileged person, until she had found herself married to Lanny Budd. Now the vision of herself as wife of the man who was really dominating the Government of the British Empire—well, it swelled her up visibly, and that wasn't so good, because maternity and good living had already done their work with her, and she was worried about *embonpoint*, just like Beauty Budd, and living on a diet of mutton chops and salads, which were supposed to be "reducing."

X

Not far from here was the estate of Rosemary, Countess of Sandhaven, Lanny's old flame. She was a year older than he, still blooming, and a lovely person to look at, with gentle regular features and two great ropes of straw-coloured hair which she had refused to cut off in spite of fashion. Her husband was in the diplomatic service and just now in Brazil; he had given his word not to get into any more scandals, but he had never promised to live within his income. Sandhaven Manor was in debt, and any time Lanny came to England, all he had to do was to call up Rosemary, and have tea with her and stroll in the long gallery where her husband's ancestors and their ladies were portrayed. He would remark: "I think I might interest somebody in that Romney." Rosemary would reply: "What do you suppose it would bring?" and they would go through a routine of his refusing to set prices, she saying what a nuisance it was, she had nobody else to advise her and why couldn't he be sensible?

The way it would end, he would say; "Well, if it was mine, I would think that five thousand pounds was a good price." She would answer: "All right, if you can get that, I'll put it up to Bertie." Lanny would send cablegrams, and in a few days would have the money; then Rosemary would cable her husband and he would authorize the sale. Lanny would get ten per cent. from his client and Rosemary would take ten per cent. of what Bertie got—and in addition would make him agree to use part of the balance to pay off this and that creditor who was worrying her. Half the British aristocracy was in debt, Lanny judged from their conversation.

Such a picture deal would mean that Lanny would pay at least two visits to Sandhaven Manor, and drink two cups of hot tea per visit, and nibble as many cookies. Also he had to sit and look at a very lovely blonde, who for two considerable periods had been his sweetheart and teacher in the arts of love. She was a product of the feminist movement of the nineteen-teens; she had once smuggled a hatchet into the National Gallery so that an older woman could smash a picture in the cause of votes for women. She had learned to assert her right to do everything that men did and a little more of it. Both she and her husband enjoyed the privilege of taking love where they found it; and Rosemary had never found more with any man than with the grandson of Budd Gunmakers.

She was completely free-spoken; she had as much right to make the proposition as a man had, and she never failed to talk about these matters, inquiring as to Lanny's love life, and why they couldn't be happy now as they had been in their teens and again in their twenties. Lanny had made up his mind that he wanted an exclusive love, if any, but he couldn't tell Rosemary that without seeming a prig, and incidentally hurting the feelings of a good friend. It wouldn't help any to say that he was in love with some other woman, for Rosemary wouldn't have seen why that should make any difference. It was a problem how to deal with this situation, and Lanny had taken refuge in the idea of being a queer fellow who had been so much hurt by love that he had sworn off it for the rest of his days.

He would divert the conversation to Rosemary's two sons, who were both in the army, one a German prisoner, and the other having escaped by the beaches of Dunkirk. Lanny said nothing about it, but he thought: Perhaps young Bertie had been one of those many men whom he and Rick had helped to lift out of the water. There had been so many of them, and the work of getting them onto the ships had gone on by night as well as by day; many had been too exhausted to speak, and Lanny hadn't seen their faces or even their uniforms. It was the toughest ordeal that he had ever undergone, but now, looking back upon it, he felt proud of himself.

XI

A seat on one of the Clippers crossing the Atlantic these days went not by price but by favour, and you had to be very important. But few could be more so than a man who was making aeroplanes to help in the salvation of Britain, and when such a man said that his son was bringing him data which might be the means of improving the plane, the authorities had to take his word. Robbie's London solicitor, Mr. Stafforth, said he would arrange it as soon as possible; and apparently he knew the ropes, for two days later the laconic gentleman called up to report that arrangements had been made for the following Friday.

Also there came a call from Rick, saying: "Our friend will call on Thursday afternoon." So Lanny bade farewell to his family at Wickthorpe and went up to the huge sprawling city under the silvery barrage balloons. He always went to the Marchester, because there, in the super-luxury lounge, he would find the sort of people whose talk was important to a P.A. "People with Munich faces," Rick had called them; and sure enough, Lanny could have found a dozen in an hour who would say that we had already lost the war and what was the use of making so much fuss about it? People to whom the war meant nothing but personal inconvenience, and who meant to have as little of that as they could contrive!

Lanny lunched with an exquisitely corrupt youth whose father had got him exempted on grounds of his being indispensable to a banking business. Now with a pretty little doll who called herself a chorus lady but didn't work at it, he outlined to the son of Budd-Erling—whom he imagined to be immensely wealthy—a scheme for making a fortune out of speculations in French electrical shares; they were down to a quarter of their value, and this tipster had information as to which concerns had made their deals with the Nazis and would stand to come out on top when peace had come—which would be before the leaves fell, his father was sure.

Expecting Alf's visit, Lanny went to the obscure hotel where he had met Rick. It was a cheap place and a drab room, but had the advantage that nobody knew you or concerned himself about what you were doing. Lanny was lying on the bed reading back copies of New York newspapers when the Royal Air Force man tapped on his door.

Alfred Pomeroy-Neilson, twenty-three, would become a baronet if he could manage to live long enough, which seemed far from likely at the moment. He had been Lanny's friend since his nursery days, and was one of the few who shared the secret that Lanny was an enemy of the Fascists posing as their friend. Alf knew that his father had got important information through this American, and he

assumed that someone overseas must be doing the same. Four years ago he had been flying for the Spanish Republican government, and Lanny had been the means of helping him out of a Franco dungeon. For that he owed his life, and was ready to pay the debt if ever the opportunity came. Just now what Lanny asked was to learn all he could about the air war now coming to its climax around and above the coasts of Britain. So Alfy would set aside the rule of silence which his group had laid upon him.

He was a tall, slender fellow, with his mother's fair hair and his father's thin features and alert expression. He was very much of a "Red," more so than either of the elders; he saw this war as a deliberate assault of the German cartels—steel, coal, power, and munitions—upon the labour movements of the rest of the world. Hitler was a puppet of these interests; they had bought him the guns, without which he would have remained a street-corner rabble-rouser. The end of the war must be the overthrow of those giant exploiters, not merely in Germany but all over the world; otherwise it would be a "defeat in the victory," as Lanny's friend Herron had written after the last war—and what a prophet he had proved to be!

For the moment Alfy's job was hunting the Hun, and he had been at it day and night. He was thinner and paler than ever before; obviously he was living on his nerves, and his friend would have liked first of all to buy him a square meal and then put him to bed. But no, he had only a few hours' leave and they must talk "shop." This was a war for survival, as Churchill had said; the balance was swinging one way and then the other, hour by hour, and the little push that you could give to-day might determine which way it would swing for keeps.

Alfy explained that the Hun flyers were trying to counter the British blockade. They had their bases close to the coast of France; indeed they had them all along the coast of Europe, from Narvik in Northern Norway all the way to the Spanish border. They were trying to establish command of the Channel and block off the British ports; they were coming in flights of five hundred at a time; bombing ships and shipping, docks and harbour installations, oil depots, and everything of military value. For the most part they came at night, because their daytime losses had been too heavy. But night bombing wasn't accurate; and now the British had a wonderful new night-fighter with a device for seeing in the dark so ultra-secret that even Alfy didn't know what it was. He revealed also that the British had constructed great numbers of imitation air bases to fool the Germans; they were so good that the Germans were dropping more bombs on them than on the real ones; so good that the British flyers had trouble in remembering not to land on them.

XII

Alfy talked about the new Budd-Erling known as the Tycoon. He spoke plainly; no use shirking the facts. It was good, but not good enough; nowhere near so good as the newest British fighter, the Supermarine Spitfire, shortened to "Superspit." Alfie went into technicalities, and Lanny made careful notes, for it was all right for him to have data on this subject, especially since he was leaving on the morrow. These new horrors had eight machine-guns, four in each wing, and they made a terrific cone of fire; but .303 calibre wouldn't do, they had to be fifty. That added to the weight, of course; there was a tendency for the fighters to become heavier; more speed meant larger engines, and there was a call for armour over this vital part and that.

Like the century-old duel between gun and armour on battleships was the duel between safety and manœuvrability on pursuit planes. Alfie pointed out that there was such a thing as having too much manœuvrability; more than the human organism could make use of. If you turned at a speed of more than two hundred miles, you were pretty sure to black out, and you might not come to until you had hit the ground, or until the enemy had drilled you through. The Englishman drew an extraordinary picture of what it meant to be carrying on an air duel four or five miles above the ground, breathing from an oxygen tank, pursuing an enemy who was ducking and dodging at the terrific speeds these planes could now attain. The Hun was swerving; you almost had him in your sights, and if you could swerve a tiny fraction more you would have him; but there came, as it were, a yellowish-grey curtain before your eyes, the first warning of the blackout; you had to know exactly how far you could go toward unconsciousness, and you might have to make that decision a dozen times in the course of a prolonged duel of wits with your opponent—he facing exactly the same problem. If you straightened out, you would lose your man; also, you might discover another enemy plane on your tail, one who might get you in *his* sights.

This greatly dreaded blackout was caused by centrifugal force driving the blood from your head. There were ways to counter it partially; you contracted your abdomen, and held an extra amount of air in your lungs; that took a powerful man, which Alfie wasn't. Leaning forward helped a little, because it lowered the head and made the task of the heart easier. The flyer said: "If it wasn't for that yellowish-grey curtain, I could have got five times as many of the bastards."

Lanny replied: "I will tell you something important. Robbie tells me that our scientists are working on the problem of a flying suit

that will prevent the blackout. It will have inflatable rubber pockets over certain parts of the body that will restrict the flow of blood to the extremities and so tend to keep it in the head. The thing will be automatic; when the centrifugal force reaches a certain point, the clamps will be instantly applied. It won't feel so comfortable, but it may enable you to get the enemy in your sights."

"You can tell Robbie if he gets that, he can forget about armour and concentrate on manoeuvrability and firepower."

"Don't say anything about it, even to your superiors," Lanny cautioned. "It's a rather obvious idea, but the Nazis may not have hit on it. If we get it, you can be sure we'll send it to Britain."

XIII

When these two had last discussed the prospects of the air war, the baronet's grandson had said: "Our men are better." Now Lanny wanted to know how it was working out, and the answer was: "We are holding our own; and nobody could ask more, considering the handicaps. The Hun is on the offensive, and that means we are always outnumbered; sometimes we fight ten or twenty to one, and have to manage to survive until help arrives."

The basic handicap was that of geography. The Germans had bases close to England, and could be dropping bombs on British cities a few minutes after they were discovered; but if the British wanted to bomb German cities they had to fly for an hour or two, exposed to flak all the way; the enemy had time to assemble great fleets of fighters—in short he had everything in his favour, both going and coming. "When one of our men catches a Hun by himself, the Hun ducks for the nearest cloud and has no shame about it. That tells the story of who is the better."

Alfy talked about the men with whom he flew. They were a sober lot, far more so than those of the last war, by Rick's account. They had put the future out of their minds; they lived in the moment and its dangers. They were saving England, or trying to, but they seldom talked about that; they talked about the enemy and his tricks, and the critical tenth of a second in which they had got him. Always something new to learn, some new formation, some device of teamwork. While resting, they read mystery stories, or talked about girls. Most of them were young, and the newcomers still younger.

The Royal Air Force had been a volunteer organization, and the pilots were mostly of the upper class. Alfy said: "I hate to admit it, but it's the old school tie that is doing the job, because there's nobody else. But that won't be true for long; we're having to take qualified

men wherever we can find them now. And that's all to the good; if we don't break down England's caste system, we'll find this war was hardly worth fighting."

Lanny agreed with all that; but he wanted to shake his head sadly when the flyer went on to say: "There will be a different England after this war. Our people will never be content with the old life, after the sacrifices they have made." Lanny had heard exactly the same words from Alf's father during World War I, before this youngster had been born. However, there was no use saying anything to discourage a man who belonged to death.

"First we have to win," Lanny said, a proposition beyond dispute. Alf wanted to know what help could be expected from overseas, and how it was possible for the people there to be so blind to the meaning of Nazi victory for themselves. Were the "isolationists" in America the same as the "appeasers" in Britain, persons who thought more of their class than of their country?

"It's not quite the same," Lanny explained. "It's what I call the peasant mind. The peasant is interested only in his own fields and doesn't see beyond them, except, perhaps, for a small strip that he would like to add to his own. Americans have been safe behind their three thousand miles of ocean, and it's hard indeed for them to realize that that ocean has dried up. A few men of vision understand the situation, and have to awaken the others. Fortunately Roosevelt is such a man."

"Many of us over here think he's the greatest statesman in the world, Lanny."

"He is a lot better than the American people deserved, or would have accepted if they had known what they were getting."

"Do you think they'll re-elect him?"

"I'll be able to judge better when I'm back there. I've been reading the New York papers." Lanny picked up a copy of the *Times*. "You see this headline: 'Willkie Says President Courts War.' That seems to be the level on which the campaign is being conducted."

They talked about American politics for a while, and Lanny explained as well as he could the curious practice by which the party out of power is compelled to attack the policies of the party in power, regardless of its own historic principles. So now the Republicans were the party of isolationism, even of pacifism, whereas for half a century they had been the party of imperialism; more fantastic yet, they were the party of states' rights, which surely must make the body of Abraham Lincoln turn over in his Springfield tomb. "Anything to beat Roosevelt" was now the one Republican principle.

"Have you ever met him?" Alf asked, and Lanny hated to lie outright to one whom he loved. "I have met him casually. He is

one of the hardest-worked men in the world, I imagine. What we load onto him is enough to break the back of an elephant."

XIV

They went out to dinner, in a small restaurant where nobody would know them. The great city was full of men in uniform, and no one paid special attention to an officer with wings on his uniform. They talked about their two families, home news which would be of no interest to enemy ears; everyone was on the alert just then, because more than fifty empty parachutes had been found in various open places in England and Scotland—which meant that enemy spies had come down during the night. These spies would undoubtedly be English-looking and English-speaking men and perhaps women, so the newspapers warned; they would be saboteurs, equipped with explosives and incendiary materials; or they would carry suitcases containing radio transmitting sets, powerful enough to reach the French coast or submarines lying close to shore.

There came the scream of sirens. People had had a year to get used to them; some leaped up and ran for the nearest shelter, others sat quiet and finished their dinner; it was a matter of temperament. The sound of guns was heard in the distance, and then nearer; the ack-ack made quick sharp sounds like the barking of a dog but much faster; they spread all around, an all-pervading clatter. Then another sound, a dull boom, which people had agreed to describe by the word "crump." Alfie, familiar with all sounds of war, exclaimed: "By Jove! They have broken through! The first time they have done it by daylight!" Lanny didn't need to ask; he knew the sounds of bombs from many scenes of war.

They had finished their dinner; Lanny paid the bill and they strolled out with carefully preserved dignity to the street. There were people looking up; there were always people willing to risk their lives to see a show, and this was a free country. It was after sunset, but there was still enough light to see that the air was full of planes, high up, darting in every direction, for all the world like a swarm of midges in the springtime. Hundreds of them, perhaps a thousand, and you couldn't tell which was which, you couldn't pick out any particular "dog-fight." But now a great swarm of larger planes came sailing straight across, more slowly, out of a mass of cumulus clouds. You knew that these were the bombers; these were what the others were fighting about. They were so close together that it seemed to be a solid web. The bursts of firing mingled into a vast whirring, filling all the sky; and if this pair of diners gazing upward hadn't been so

afraid of showing the least sign of concern, they might have admitted that many millions of bullets being released in the sky had to come down somewhere on London streets and roofs.

"When you see a show like that," remarked Alf, "you have only one thought, you want to be up there."

"You can't do everything," was his friend's reply. "This is your day of rest."

"This is damn serious," replied the unrelenting airman. "If they can break through like this, it means we're losing. It's what they haven't dared before."

They went on discussing air-war strategy and statistics, until there came a terrific mechanical scream and then a deafening explosion, and a house about half a block away went up in a blast of flame and smoke and flying debris. The air compression hit them like a sort of universal blow, sparing no part of them, inside or out, and almost toppling them over. Showers of rubble fell about them, and it was at least a minute before they could speak, and longer before they could hear. Meantime there came more explosions, near and far, behind and before them.

"Shall we go and help?" shouted Alf; but Lanny caught him by the arm. "Leave it to the wardens, old man; you have your own job."

XV

So they condescended to seek shelter. Near by was an entrance to the underground railway, to Englishmen "the tube." They walked, rapidly but not running, to this goal. Many other people had been seized by the same idea and were not under the necessity of preserving their dignity; they got there first, and it was some time before the two gentlemen could crowd themselves in. The place was packed almost to suffocation, and the conditions were not pleasing to persons of refined sensibilities. There was public clamour for Government to "do something about it," but Government had a lot of other things on their hands at the moment. It seemed more important to use steel for guns and ammunition than for the building of an underground city for seven million Londoners, to say nothing of the inhabitants of Portsmouth and Southampton and Sheffield and Birmingham and all the rest.

There were many, especially women and old people, who had taken up the tube as their dwelling place; they brought a pallet or a blanket to sleep on, they brought baskets of food, and refused to be driven out into the open. The sanitary arrangements were inadequate and

the filth shocking. At first the police had tried to force people out, but as the danger increased and more homes were wrecked and people buried under them, the authorities had to give up and allow this subterranean way of life to become general. Was there going to develop an underground race of creatures, pale and spindling, unable to bear the sunlight, as predicted long ago in the stories of H. G. Wells? The son of Budd-Erling, squeezed like a sardine in a can and jarred to the marrow of his bones by blast after blast of the bombs, would have had to be superhuman if he had not thought with a certain amount of relief about a ticket for to-morrow's Clipper reposing safely in a pocket over his heart!

He groped his way through the blackout to his hotel, and spent the night without sleep, listening to the uproar of that infernal battle. He had made the mistake of choosing a hotel which was just across the street from Hyde Park, and all London parks were full of anti-aircraft guns. Every time one of these went off the blast of air shot the window curtains straight out into the room and tried to lift the covers off Lanny's bed. The walls shook as in an earthquake, and small objects on bureau and tables jumped and rattled. Lanny decided that it was folly to risk staying in bed, and put on his clothes and went down into a crowded shelter. His knees were shaking and his teeth chattering—not merely for himself but for England. He knew this was the real blitz, this was the supreme effort, which both Hitler and Göring had told him was coming. Up there in black sky the night-fighter pilots were racing at a speed of four hundred miles an hour, hunting the murderers, trying to save England, trying to save the democratic world. Lanny's prayers went up for them, and his thoughts were those that Winston Churchill was soon to put into immortal words: that never in history had so many owed so much to so few.

BOOK TWO

COMES THE MOMENT TO DECIDE

4

Hands Across The Seas

I

FROM the smooth water of a little port on the coast of Ireland the magical Clipper transported Lanny Budd to the smooth water of a larger port near the end of Long Island: a safe and comfortable journey, but slightly monotonous, for in the calm weather in early September one part of the Atlantic looked exactly like another part, and you could only wonder why the Lord had taken the trouble to make such immense quantities of water. Lanny entertained himself with magazines which he had brought along, and in one of them he read an article about a huge plant on the coast of Texas which was busily extracting magnesium from ocean water and turning it into aeroplane parts, and also incendiary bombs to be dropped from the planes. So he turned his thoughts from the works of God to those of man, and found one as incomprehensible as the other.

At the airport he put his painting in storage with the customs authorities, and went straight to the nearest telephone. In his mind he carried the number of a little brick house in his national capital, and now he called it and asked for a man named Baker. He had never been told this man's first name, or what he did; the man meant just one thing, the way to Franklin D. Roosevelt's bedroom, whether at the White House or at Hyde Park, New York. At this hot season of the year it would have been the great man's pleasure to be at his country home; but in this hottest of war seasons he was chained to the sweltering capital.

Lanny spoke: "Is this Baker?"—and then: "Zaharoff One-oh-three." The reply was: "Call me in three hours"—that being, presumably, the time it took to get to the White House and arrange an appointment. Lanny wondered: Were there really a hundred and three presidential agents, or had some of them died or quit? And were the same precautions taken with all who were still working? He would never ask these questions.

He went in to New York, got himself a hotel room, and telephoned

to his father. He bathed and shaved and fed himself, and read the latest newspapers; in times like these the history of the world might be changed between the three-star edition and the four. It was hard for Lanny Budd to think about anything but that sky battle over London—it was going on while a P.A. was bathing, shaving, eating, or whatever it might be. Alfy would be in it, and perhaps at that very instant was blacked out, or shot, and plunging headlong from a height of several miles.

Promptly on the minute Lanny put in his call and was told: "There is a reservation for you on the 7 p.m. plane from La Guardia Field. Meet me at the usual corner at 10 p.m." He replied: "O.K.," and that was all. He could tell from the promptness of the appointment that the Big Chief was eager for his report. The Chief knew, even better than Lanny, about the sky battle and its meaning in the history of mankind.

Lanny's ticket was paid for and he had only to board the plane and sit and make note of the familiar sounds and feelings while it was airborne. Never would he cease to marvel at this happening; he was old enough to have heard of its first beginnings, and now it was in process of reducing the size of the world, making the nations one and compelling the formation of an international government. So, at any rate, Lanny had come to believe, and the only question was who was to run that government. Hitler or Roosevelt? So the issue presented itself, not merely to the son of Budd-Erling, but to those two heads of states: two masterful men, each of whom knew what he wanted, and knew that he could get it only by thwarting the other.

Lanny used the hour of this flight to go over in his mind exactly what he wanted to say. In these rare interviews—he had had nine of them in three years—he felt that he was helping to change the world, which needed it so greatly. He couldn't get in everything he planned, for F.D. also liked to talk, and was used to having the right of way. But before Lanny left he could always say: "There is one matter that I ought to speak of, Governor," and the "Governor" would answer: "Shoot!" If it was something that surprised him he would exclaim: "Great guns!"—or perhaps: "You don't tell me!" Lanny had found himself taking up these phrases, as he had taken up many of the ideas and points of view of this great leader whom he loved.

II

At ten o'clock on a hot September evening the P.A. strolled idly by a Washington street corner, and a car drew up at the curb and he stepped in. There were two men in the car, and while one of

them drove, the other flashed a torchlight into the passenger's face. "Zaharoff," Lanny said, and the other replied with the indispensable "O.K." In the old days they had searched him, but now they knew him, and if the Chief wanted to see him, that was all there was to it.

The front door of the White House, under the tall white pillars, is known as the "social door," and serves the purpose of a back door, since it is rarely used. Lanny had always been taken there, and usually no word had been spoken. But now it was wartime and there were two soldiers on duty. One of them said to Baker: "You know this party?" and then: "The President is expecting him?" So they were passed in, and went up by the side stairway. The President's negro valet sat dozing in a chair just outside the bedroom door, ready to give help to a crippled man whenever the buzzer sounded. Baker tapped, and Lanny heard the warm voice which all the world knew over the radio: "Come in."

He entered that high-ceilinged bedroom with the old prints on the wall and the big mahogany bed with the blue counterpane. Sitting propped up with pillows was the man with the big head and massive shoulders, covered by a pyjama coat of blue-and-white-striped pongee. He held out a large hand, and his features wore the usual welcoming smile; he spoke first to Baker, saying: "All right, and thanks." The man went out, closing the door behind him, and only then did F.D. address Lanny. "Welcome to our city! Take a seat, and tell me all about Europe!" Never would this genial soul begin an interview in any but a playful mood. But in spite of that, Lanny thought that he was paler, and his face lined with care.

"You got my reports?" the visitor asked.

"Every one, according to number." He pointed to a stack on his reading table. "I got them out in your honour. They have been invaluable."

"That is what I need to hear. I have just come from London, where I saw the bombing of the night before last. Is has been going on continuously ever since, as I read in the papers."

"It has been going on to-night, so Churchill told me a couple of hours ago. I could hear some of the racket over the phone."

"I take it to mean that Hitler has made up his mind there's no chance of the collaborationists having their way. One item I have just learned: Lord Wickthorpe is resigning from the Foreign Office, and that means the same thing—he is hopeless as to making progress at the moment."

"Will that restrict your access to information?"

"I think it may have the opposite effect. He will feel more free to talk when he is not bound by his official conscience."

"Such people won't count for much in England now, I imagine."

"They will bide their time and wait for the world to come their way. I have been on their errands to Madrid and Paris and Vichy, and it's curious to note how they are the same crowd, whatever their nationality. It is one type of mind all over Europe—and America, too, I gather. The cookie-pushers whom our State Department sends to Vichy might be Marshal Pétain's own sons, or grandsons."

"But we *have* to send that type, Lanny! If I sent a Pink like you, the old gentleman would decide that I must be Stalin's brother-in-law. Nobody can talk to those people but a Catholic."

"I suppose not; but the trouble is, they talk so much like Pétain that he thinks it's his own voice."

"We have some liberal Catholics, Lanny."

"I have heard it said, and it may be so. All I can tell you is that the only way a Catholic can be liberal is by being ignorant of the fundamental doctrines of his Church."

"Well, what they don't know won't hurt them," chuckled the President. "My job is to try to keep the French Fleet out of the hands of the Nazis. I have a good old Irish Catholic admiral here in Washington, and I'm thinking of sending him over to pray with the Marshal day and night."

III

The Chief Executive had on his reading table a report from Lanny Budd giving the essential facts as to the situation in Unoccupied France. But the Chief was more than a filing cabinet full of facts, he was a human being with personal curiosities, a boy who loved adventure stories. He wanted to see these persons and hear their voices; he plied his agent with questions about the aged Marshal and his entourage; about Darlan the Admiral of the Fleet and Weygand the General of the North African Armies, and especially about the evil Pierre Laval and his wretched family. "I envy you, Lanny," said F.D., and not altogether jokingly. "You can travel and see the world, while I—look at what I have to read and sign!"—pointing to the stack of papers on the bed beside him. "By golly, if I'd known what they were wishing onto me, I'd have remained the Squire of Krum Elbow and Senior Warden of St. James's Episcopal Church in Hyde Park."

But this man of great affairs had put his hand to the plough, and had to go to the end of the furrow. Different from most ploughmen, he was working in the dark and couldn't see what lay ahead. Many boulders, many stumps, and perhaps—who could say?—enemy-planted mines! Just now a national election lay ahead; and how

many blunders a free-spoken political manipulator might commit ! One careless sentence might be enough to turn an election, and bring to naught the labours of eight years !

After hearing about Vichy France, he wanted to know about Paris and the masters of that country—the Comité des Forges, the cartel owners, and the deals they were making with the military conquerors to save their possessions and power. What was Schneider doing, and was Le Creusot going all out for German munitions production ? Lanny said: "He is greatly humiliated, because the Germans have reported that his works are out-of-date and they can't make much use of them."

"And what about the British ? Will they bomb these and other plants, or will there be a gentlemen's agreement, as before ?" Lanny replied: "This time they will go all out. This isn't going to be a gentlemen's war."

And then the Nazi leaders ! Hitler, Göring, Hess, Abetz—the President of the United States would never have the pleasure of meeting any of these extraordinary characters, but wanted to see them with his mind's eye. Lanny said: "Unless the British should capture them, and send them over and exhibit them in cages." This brought one of F.D.'s hearty laughs. He listened, fascinated, while Lanny described the Führer of the Germans doing a little jig in front of the motion-picture cameras after the astonishing armistice had been signed, and then brooding in front of the tomb of Napoleon, whom he greatly admired and meant to supplant on the pedestal of Europe's history.

"He doesn't want to fight Britain," Lanny explained. "He really means that with all his heart; he considers it a painful necessity which has been forced upon him by vicious politicians, and the plutocratic-Jewish press, which he calls irresponsible, meaning that the press lords publish what they please, instead of being told by the government."

"This air war is the real beginning, I take it ?" queried the other.

"I should guess so. There were rumours when I left London that an attempt had been made to embark an invasion army from Belgium. I didn't have time to find out if it was true."

"I can tell you about it, if you won't pass it on."

"I never pass anything on, Governor—except what you have told me to."

"It was a rehearsal; the Germans were practising embarkation, but the British didn't see any reason for sparing them on that account. The bombers dropped large tanks of oil with devices to ignite them. From my accounts there were thousands of enemy troops consumed in the holocaust."

"They will try it again," the agent opined. "Hitler has a million men whom he considers expendable, because he expected to lose them in France and didn't. But first he has to knock out the R.A.F."

"What do you hear about the chances?"

Lanny described his interview with the baronet's grandson, who had worn the "old school tie" but didn't love it, at least not as much as he loved the work shirt. Lanny told what he had seen of the bombing and of the air-raid shelter in the tube. He did not spare the Budd-Erling plane, but told what Alfie had said about its weaknesses. "I thought it was the best in the world," remarked F.D., and Lanny replied: "It was, a year ago; but these days a year's improvements are crowded into a month. As Alfie said: 'Your father is making planes for money, but we are making them for our lives.'"

"Your father will be catching up, I hope."

"I asked him over the telephone if he had a new model on the drawing boards, and he said: 'We have it in production.' You can be sure he's getting full reports."

IV

They talked for a while about this battle of the skies, upon which everything else depended. Tennyson had predicted it a hundred years earlier, but he had probably not foreseen that it would be over his own village. "It is touch and go," declared the President. "Britain has never been in such peril—not even from the Spanish Armada."

Said the visitor: "For God's sake, do everything you can to help."

"I have emptied our arsenals into Britain. They weren't so very full, alas!"

"May I ask you a question, Governor?"

"Sure thing."

"I heard some talk about our over-age destroyers that the British are hoping to get. I didn't know what to answer—and you know it helps me to get information if I am able to give some."

"It's a curious situation, which can't be talked about because it would be taken as putting blame on Churchill. We've been reconditioning fifty of those old four-stackers and have them practically ready—torpedoes in the tubes, oil in the tanks, food in the storerooms—they could be in Halifax in a few days. But you see, it was my idea to exchange these ships for the bases we must have in British territory on this side of the water. I want to call it a trade, and it seems a fair one, considering the fact that we have to build the bases and that they will be as important for British defence as for ours."

"And Churchill can't see it?"

"Darned if I can make out what is in his mind. Apparently it's something ancestral, perhaps racial. He is a Tory imperialist—or is that a redundant phrase?"

"I suppose one could think of an imperialist who isn't a Tory. Cecil Rhodes might be an example. Does Churchill think you want to get possession of his islands?"

"I have sworn to him that he couldn't give them to me if he tried. Believe me, they have been my fishing ground, and I know them. They would be nothing but headaches, and we have enough already in Porto Rico and the Virgins. They are economic vacuums; worse yet, their populations are mostly Negro, and we have enough race problems already. Imagine me having to administer the affairs of coloured people who have been brought up in the British fashion, to sit in their local councils and be received as social equals! Imagine what our Southern congressmen would say, and what our Harlem population would answer!"

"Churchill can't see that?"

"I don't think he doubts my word, but apparently he doesn't trust the future. He has some queer idea of prestige; he thinks it would be more noble and dignified to make us a present of the concessions, and then we'd make him a present of the fifty destroyers. But I tell him our people wouldn't see it that way. Every Yankee knows what a horse trade is; but a gift, that is something else, and it would raise a hullabaloo, it might cost me the election. There's a grave question whether the deal will be constitutional anyhow; Jackson, my attorney general, has been tearing the law books to pieces trying to find some justification. But I can't get Churchill to see it my way; I think he has the idea that if he makes us a free and generous gift, some President ninety-nine years from now may be less tempted to hold onto the lease!"

"May I make a suggestion, Governor?"

"I've said that if anybody can solve this problem for me I'll give him all the plastic elephants on my office desk!"

"Tell me what the bases are that we're to get."

"Two up in Newfoundland, and then Bermuda, and half a dozen spots on the islands from the Bahamas to Trinidad. It's really a tremendously important thing, because it means that British sea and air power is being replaced by ours in the Western Atlantic. Empires don't give up so easily as a rule."

"This occurs to me: have you offered to split the difference with him? Let him make you a present of the bases he considers most important, say those in the north and Bermuda; and make your horse trade for those in the Caribbean, which he knows have less value as land, or for tourists, or whatever."

The President sat lost in thought. "By golly, that might do the trick! At any rate, it can't do any harm to try." He pressed a button, and spoke into a transmitter by his bed. "Get me Secretary Hull." And then to Lanny: "Hull and Lothian have been arguing about this till they're both ready to drop dead."

A buzzer sounded and he took the telephone. "Hello, Cordell? I have an idea about the four-stackers." Lanny was amused to note that he didn't say: "Somebody has suggested an idea." Nor did he say: "I have thought of an idea," for that wouldn't have been quite true. He outlined the plan, and apparently the elderly secretary was pleased by it, for his Chief beamed and said: "O.K.—go after him right away. If they won't take that there's something really wrong." Then to his visitor: "If the deal goes through, the elephants are your commission!"

V

Lanny always made it a point to offer to leave. The stack of papers over which the great man worked in bed always seemed like a hint, and never once had it been necessary for him to terminate an interview with this agent. But now he wanted to talk. "I don't see you very often," he said. "Are you finding it difficult to get about in wartime?"

"My father's business is a sufficient pretext so far as Britain is concerned; and as for Vichy, I rather think that Wickthorpe will be wanting me to go there, and will find some way to arrange it."

"Are you planning to visit Germany again?"

"I'm not sure. They know all about my father's help to Britain, and the destroyer deal will make Americans still less popular. I'll probably go into Switzerland and get word to Hess; he might come to see me there, or invite me into Germany to see the Führer. I have a strong tie with Rudi, because of our interest in psychic matters."

"You really take those things seriously?"

"I take them very seriously, though I don't claim to know what they mean. I can only say that I have had experiences which nobody can explain. I won't start telling you about them, because we might talk all night, and your to-morrow's schedule would be knocked out."

"That would be nothing new to my secretaries," remarked F.D. with one of his grins. He took a sort of impish pleasure in breaking out of harness. But not so often in these tragic days. Lanny thought: Poor soul! and would have liked to stay and try to help; but he knew

what the President's answer would be: "Nobody else can do what you are doing abroad."

"At this moment," continued the Chief, "the important question is whether Hitler can get a toehold on the British Isles. Bill Donovan, whose business it is to find out, tells me that the Germans haven't enough landing craft, and can't build them in time; the British navy will smash them—unless they can win complete control of the air. We ought to know about that in the next couple of months. How long before you plan to return?"

"I have some picture business to attend to. It will take a couple of weeks, unless you need me sooner."

"I may have to break away for a bit of rest. My doctor is making a fuss because I am run down, and when that happens I get a cold, even in midsummer."

"I agree with your doctor," Lanny said, smiling in turn. "I'll wait until you come back, and then call for instructions."

"Do, please," was the reply. "I always think of things that you might do for me."

He held out a cordial hand, and Lanny wrung it. "Take care of yourself, Governor. The whole world needs you."

"The same to you," was the reply. "I won't say the whole world, but *I* need you, and that's no applesauce."

VI

The great port and manufacturing centre of Baltimore, which calls itself the Monumental City, and is known to the world as the city of the orioles, both the birds and the baseball team, lies a half-hundred miles north of Washington. It was the home of Lanny's friends, the Holdenhursts, and he had a standing invitation to visit them when passing. It was somewhat embarrassing, because Lizbeth, the family darling, still had the notion to marry him, and Lanny had had to explain frankly to the father that he wasn't a marrying man. If he had consulted his own preferences, he would have stayed away from tempting and being tempted; but the situation was complicated by the fact that Reverdy Johnson Holdenhurst was one of the heaviest Budd-Erling stockholders, and a source of new capital, much needed in this crisis when the aeroplane industry was expanding at a rate never equalled.

The President had publicly called for fifty thousand planes. It sounded like a joke, or a bit of braggadocio, to most of the world; but the insiders discovered that it was seriously meant, and if they didn't get busy on an adequate scale, the Army and Navy and a lot

of officials kept calling up and raising Cain. If for any reason you weren't moving fast enough they would start buying your best men away from you—for the "know-how" was the all-important thing, which neither you nor they could get along without. They literally tried to force money upon you—millions, tens of millions. But Robbie was afraid of public money, and of the bureaucrats who handled it; they always tied strings to it, and every day they would have a tighter hold on the business, telling him what he could do and what not. He preferred private money, because he believed in private business and the sort of people who were satisfied with dividends and had no interest in control.

Robbie had said over the phone: "Reverdy has asked for another block of stock. Do stop by and say hello to him." When Lanny showed up, his father would ask: "Did you see the Holdenhursts, and how are they?" There was subtle scheming behind this, for both Robbie and his wife were convinced that Lizbeth would make the right sort of wife for Lanny, and they hadn't given up the hope that he would change his mind.

Then, too, Reverdy had developed a sudden interest in old masters. He hadn't had it when he and his daughter had first arrived at Cannes less than two years ago; and it was hard to believe that a man would take to spending money in large quantities just in the hope of getting a not-too-eligible art expert for a son-in-law. Lanny thought this might be the first time in the life of the sweet and gentle Lizbeth that she had wanted something very much and had not been able to get it. Lanny had lived his life among the children of privilege, and was familiar with the demands they made—and the fuss when their desires were thwarted. Compared with some of the affairs he had seen and heard of on the Riviera, this Holdenhurst intrigue was naïve and touching, something out of an Elsie Dinsmore story.

Reverdy had told Lanny the sort of paintings he wanted, and Lanny had been on the lookout for them, and had accumulated a list of half a dozen. It wasn't the sort of thing that could be attended to by mail; you had to answer questions. So next morning, after telephoning and ascertaining that a visit would be agreeable, he took the first train to Baltimore, and the Holdenhurst chauffeur met him at the station. This being a democratic land, the chauffeur told him the latest news about the city, and asked the latest about the old Continent, the source of all troubles. Lanny was democratic, too, but couldn't show it; when he met strangers he was always the lover of the arts, *au-dessus de la mêlée*. But he was free to tell how it felt to be bombed and how the London people were taking it. Everywhere in America he could be sure of an absorbed audience for conversation on that subject.

VII

Here was Greenbriar, this elegant country estate, with gracious and cultivated people ready to welcome him. Here was every form of recreation at his disposal; he could play tennis or the piano, or he could sit by the best of radio sets and listen to voices from this or other lands. The weather was hot, but there were shaded porches and electric fans, and there would be mint juleps with cracked ice, or lemon squashes, with or without a "stick" in them. Soft-shell crabs were in season, and bluefish; if you didn't mind the sunburn you could take a trip to the bay and catch fish of varied hues. You could motor on fine roads, still called "turnpikes." In the evening there were dances at the Country Club—in short, there was everything you could think of for comfort and pleasure, and if some of the women were drinking too much, and the girls running about without chaperons, you could say that it was the disturbed state of the world, the New Deal, the war, the general licence. You could go on in the comfortable certainty that "Bawlamaw" was the finest city in the world, "Bawlamaw" women the most beautiful, and "Bawlamaw" food and cookery the envy of all mankind.

Lanny told his friend about the paintings he had come upon, and delivered one of his learned discourses about them. Reverdy didn't really know much about art; the examples he possessed, except for the Detazes, were commonplace; but he was graciously willing to learn, and it wouldn't be long before he would be passing these opinions on to others—including Lanny. Such an experience every art expert has now and then with his clients, and it is his part to listen gravely and to agree heartily.

And then Lizbeth. She was lovelier every time he saw her, the visitor thought. She was twenty now, and no longer a child; she appeared more thoughtful, and Lanny had the idea that perhaps not having her own way had been good for her. She had spent a winter at home with her mother, not taking the customary yachting cruise with her father. Doubtless it had been the mother's idea to give the eligible men of the Monumental City an opportunity to lay their gifts at her feet. Had any one of them succeeded in impressing her? Lanny asked no questions; his manner was that of a kindly uncle, which he was old enough to be.

He told her about Bienvenu and the people there—but of course not saying anything about Beauty's bad dreams. He told about Mrs. Chattersworth, and the guests who came there, and about life on the Riviera under war conditions, with everything growing scarcer day by day. He told about London under the bombs. He tried to have others present while he talked, but the others had a way of

excusing themselves, which was rather pointed, and at least made it plain that Lizbeth hadn't yet centred her thoughts upon any other man. She drove him to the Country Club, and they played tennis and then swam; the bathing suits had been contrived so that a man who was contemplating matrimony wouldn't be left in any doubt as to what he was getting. But Lanny wasn't contemplating anything except to guard his grim wartime secret, and he did not feast his eyes upon this graceful well-rounded figure, but manifested impartial interest in all the youths and maidens of Green Spring Valley's fashionable set.

Lizbeth's father ordered paintings which would pay the visitor several thousand dollars in commissions and cover all the costs of his next tour. It didn't seem decent to bolt off with no more than a handshake after that. But Lanny had taken the precaution to say over the telephone that Robbie was waiting for the latest report on the Budd-Erlings—and that was important to Reverdy as well. Lanny made no attempt to gloss over the bad situation; he said that the British found all the American planes inferior to their own, and were holding the former as reserves, to be used only in the last extremity. Budd-Erling wouldn't stay behind very long, Reverdy might be sure; and Reverdy said that he *was* sure, having had from Robbie secrets which couldn't be entrusted to mail across enemy-infested seas.

VIII

Nothing would have been easier for Lanny than to become fond of Lizbeth Holdenhurst; indeed, nothing seemed more unkind and irrational than not to do so. She was his for the asking, and she would have made him a devoted wife; not brilliant, not intellectual, but then, you can't have everything. Lanny had ideas enough for two, liked to expound them, and needed someone who liked to listen. There could be no doubt that Lizbeth had money for two, or, for that matter, a dozen. She had a sweet expression, lovely large brown eyes, soft brown hair; she knew how to take care of these gifts, and would meet his esthetic requirements, morning, noon, and night.

It was a problem he argued out with himself each time he came here. His duties were "top secret," and he couldn't share them; his journeys were the same, and what would she make of being left alone three-quarters of the time, and for no imaginable reason? How long would it be before her smart friends began to whisper into her ears their suspicions of his habits? "The other woman is always just around the corner"—such was their idea of marital affairs. "There are no saints nowadays, at least not on the French Riviera, and not among the British aristocracy." So they would jeer. And what

would Lizbeth make of his visits to the Countess of Sandhaven, his former flame? What would she think about his visits to Wickthorpe, whose countess might or might not have a moral sense?

Should he trust her with his secret? Did he have a right to? Surely not unless he married her; and what a trick to play upon a girl, to let her think that she was marrying an ivory-tower esthete, a modern Marius the Epicurean, and then reveal himself as a political conspirator who was liable to be shot at sunrise on any part of the Continent of Europe where his activities were detected! Lizbeth wouldn't have the faintest understanding of his motivations; her father was a dyed-in-the-wool Republican, a man who was cheating the income tax as a matter of principle, holding it to be a form of robbery. If Reverdy Johnson Holdenhurst had known the real contents of Lanny Budd's mind, he would as soon have married his daughter to Mephistopheles.

So it was a kindness to say: "Robbie is waiting to hear all the things I have been telling you. I'll be coming this way again before long, and I'll drop by if I may." He bade farewell to this lotus land, and the sociable chauffeur drove him to the station, which to Baltimoreans is the "dee-po."

IX

The wonderful tube took the traveller underneath the Hudson River and delivered him at Pennsylvania Station; from there a taxi conveyed him in a few minutes to Grand Central Station, and something over an hour later he was in Newcastle, Connecticut. Here was another fine home, not so elaborate as Greenbriar, but much the same in the manners, costumes, and ideas of its occupants. It resembled *Bienvenu* and *Sept Chênes* in that there was an elderly lady who couldn't rest content until she had found a proper wife for the son of Budd-Erling—or the eldest of three sons of Budd-Erling, as Esther Remsen Budd would naturally see him. She was the great lady of her town and managed many things, and it was really hard on her not to be able to do something for this stepson.

Robbie Budd was like the man in the *Arabian Nights* who pulled the cork from the bottle and let the genie out; the most unimaginable monstrous genie, that spread out over the Connecticut countryside, on the river which flowed through it, and in the skies above it. Robbie had thought that he had vision, and he had foreseen a big business, but it had been a nice little big business, so to speak, never the big big business which was now turning him and his community upside down. Concrete floors were laid down by the acre, and ships and trains and barges came loaded with structural steel, and buildings

arose with the speed of Jack's beanstalk. And the same thing was going on with the still more immense property of Budd Gunmakers, turning out machine-guns, carbines, and automatic pistols. An agency took the job of inserting advertisements all over the country, and working-men came from places you had never heard of: farm boys from Newfoundland, habitants from the Quebec wilderness, Negroes from places between Harlem and Texas: every sort of man who could be taught to weld, to rivet, or even to put in screws.

And the women, the girls! To Esther, daughter of the Puritans, it was most distressing, for she was sure they had no morals, and there was nobody to care about it. Where were they to sleep and what were they to eat? They worked in three shifts, and there were long queues of people waiting to get into Newcastle's small restaurants and inadequate grocery stores. The families came in trailers and lived in them, they put up tents, they even bought chicken coops and made them into sleeping places. The town had prayed for prosperity, but this was too much, and the Chamber of Commerce wanted to say: "Lord, can't you take a joke?"

X

Esther's two sons, now in their early thirties, were conscientious and well-trained executives, and it had been her hope that the business would settle down to a routine basis, so that Robbie could enjoy a hard-earned rest. But no; Budd-Erling was like one of its own planes caught in a hurricane, and Robbie was the pilot; he wasn't surrendering the controls. The hurricane was blowing the way he desired to travel, and he rode it with a sense of glory. He was a hearty, stoutish man, who took everything in his stride, and except for his grey hair bore few signs of his age. Budd-Erling was his life; he had planned it and now he talked it and worked at it, day and night, in the office and at home; he was no longer interested in anything else, and when he thought about politics and world affairs, it was always from the point of view: Will this increase or reduce the demand for fighter planes?

Robbie called himself, defiantly, a "merchant of death," meaning it as a jeer at persons who had been haunting his thoughts and goading him from his earliest years as salesman for Budd Gunmakers. Once he had confronted some of these people, at a congressional investigation in Washington, and he had never forgotten their severe, fanatical faces and their bitter words. They had accused him of desiring war in order that he might sell his deadly goods, or deadly evils, if you preferred. Robbie knew that that wasn't true; he knew that Europe was determined to have wars, and wherever in the business world

there is a demand, there will soon be a supply. "Nobody has to buy my products," Robbie would say; "nobody has to use them. I put them in the shop-window, and it's up to the customer." He would add: "Incidentally, my own country gets a defence factory, and some day it may happen that they'll find it useful."

In the days when Lanny had been a young Pink he had hated this philosophy and fought hard against it. But now he and his tough-minded father had been brought together in a peculiar and complicated way. The coming of Hitler had convinced Lanny that the country had to arm, and do it in a hurry; and now the submarine sinkings and the triumph of Nazi arms on the Continent had forced Robbie Budd to make terms with the hated New Deal, with "That Man in the White House" who had been for eight years the symbol of everything Robbie hated in public affairs. First, to Lanny's infinite amusement, his father had been forced to "go on the dole"; quite literally, because the Administration had wanted to arm, and a purblind Congress wouldn't vote the money, so the President had hit upon the bright idea of using relief funds, the W.P.A., the much ridiculed leaf-rakers, the boondogglers. Why wasn't it just as important to put unemployed aeroplane workers and battleship builders at work as any other sort of labourers? So the proud Robbie Budd had got contracts from the Army, and the payments had come from the despised "dole."

But now that stage was past, Lanny discovered. Congress, in a panic, was voting defence funds; first, in the spring, a billion dollars and then another billion; in midsummer five billion, and then another five; compulsory military service was being talked of—and right in the midst of a presidential campaign! So now Robbie could get respectable contracts from the Army and the Navy, contracts which he didn't have to keep secret, nor blush when his golfing friends found out about them. Also the British had come down off their high horses; the Colonel Blimps who had been so top-lofty and had plagued Robbie through the years—except the years numbered 1914–1918! They came now to Newcastle and begged almost on their knees for planes and then more planes and still more planes, even while claiming that these planes weren't good enough to fight with, and demanding more changes at every stage of manufacture!

XI

Lanny's first duty was to sit down with his father and tell what he had been able to find out concerning the performance of the Budd-Erling Typhoon. In just what respects had the Spitfire managed to

surpass it, and even more important, what was the Messerschmitt 109 now able to do? Robbie already had a mass of information, and drawings and plans and specifications for improvements; but he wanted the personal experiences of Alfie and his mates. Each detail threatened to knock out some process in Robbie's elaborately planned establishment; the sum total would mean chaos or near it for weeks, perhaps months.

It was going to be this way right along, only more so, and Robbie, in his middle sixties, had to keep his mind flexible and make life-and-death decisions between firepower and armour on the one hand and speed and manoeuvrability on the other. Upon his judgment would depend the lives of hundreds of British flyers, and perhaps of Britain itself. The president of Budd-Erling Aircraft, who had been an extreme isolationist, had been suddenly brought to face the fact that if Hitler got the British Fleet he would not merely have all Europe at his mercy but could cross to Africa, and from there with his bombers and paratroopers to Brazil; he would build his airports there, and might be at the Panama Canal before we were in position to offer him serious resistance. "What do you think, Lanny?"

The bombing attacks upon London were going on without cessation. Day and night the swarms of bombers and fighter planes came over. It was indeed the blitz; Göring *der Dicke* had been preparing it for almost eight years, and had boasted about it to both the elder and the younger Budd. Now the elder, deeply concerned, gazed at the younger, asking: "Can he get away with it?" All Lanny could say was: "It's the test of battle, and I doubt if anybody living can tell how it will turn out. Göring will send planes as long as he has any; and sooner or later one side or the other will be exhausted."

"This much I know," declared Robbie, "the British here in Newcastle are scared stiff; they aren't just play-acting."

"What will decide the issue, I am guessing, is how many planes the *Generalstab* will insist upon keeping on the eastern border. Somewhere they will have to draw the line and say: 'Not one more!'"

"You think the Russians might attack them?"

"I think either side will attack the moment it can see a certainty of victory. That is a war that has got to be fought some day."

"Well," said the father, "you know Abraham Lincoln's story of the pioneer who came home to his cabin and found his wife in hand-to-hand conflict with a bear?"

"I don't think I've heard it."

"The old fellow rested his gun against the rail fence, took a seat on the top rail, and called: 'Go it, woman; go it, bear!'"

XII

Lanny didn't tell his friends in Newcastle about having been present at the evacuation of Dunkirk, for that wasn't the sort of thing he could afford to have talked about. He could say that he had been in Paris at the time of the armistice, and that subsequently he had stayed in Vichy. This was enough to rouse the burning curiosity of everybody in town; the local newspaper wanted to interview him and the local women's club wanted to hear him talk; but in both cases he declined—he was an art expert and not competent to discuss public affairs. But privately he would answer questions for those whom his father and stepmother considered important. The town was rent with arguments between the friends of England and the friends of America, as the isolationists called themselves. "America First Committee" was the name chosen by a group of rich conservatives who were Fascists without knowing it; when Lanny read their full-page advertisements he called them "America First Aid to Hitler"—but of course only under his breath.

Naturally, people didn't talk about war and peace all the time. The Country Club set played tennis and golf, they danced, gave elaborate dinner parties, and gossiped freely about one another's love affairs. They did not spare this agreeable and eligible elder son of Budd-Erling; if he engaged in conversation with any debutante, or danced with her more than once, the rumour would spread that he was interested in her, and his stepmother would hear it and ask if he would like to have the young person invited to tea. Incidentally, Esther informed him that the town librarian, Miss Priscilla Hoyle, had married a teacher in the local high school, but was still continuing as librarian. "I don't know where we should have found anybody to take her place," said Esther, a member of the Library Board. Lanny had once kissed this lady in his automobile, though Esther had no idea it had gone that far. Now his reply was: "I have some data to look up in Vasari, and I'll stop in and congratulate her."

Also, there was the Holdenhurst family to be reported on. Esther would be expecting to hear something about Lizbeth, so Lanny remarked that she was lovelier than ever, and that a flock of the Baltimore swains were mad about her. He didn't say as to himself, and his stepmother, playing a difficult role with patience and tact, went over the problem in her mind once again. "If I urge him he'll be bored. He may even take a dislike to her, and he won't come here or go there so often." She could never be sure in her mind about this strange man whom fate had deposited in her household; more and more her shrewd judgment told her that he wasn't all on the surface, and her most natural thought was of some hidden woman.

Esther had heard about the Countess of Sandhaven, and about Madame de Bruyne; what more likely than that there was some new one, perhaps even more highly placed and therefore more carefully protected? To this daughter of the Puritans, now grey of hair and austere of features, Europe was a poisonous place; its cruel wars shocked her no more than its lack of sexual morals, and indeed she would have named the former as a consequence of the latter.

XIII

The radio habit had become dominant in these critical days; people would sit and turn the dials; they would interrupt a card game, or a dinner conversation if there was a radio set in the dining-room. Somebody would say: "It's time for Swing," and not mean the music but the commentator; you had your favourite, according to his political tinge, from Pink to pure White, or with touches of Brown or Black. You wanted the latest news, and you got it even while it was happening. "This is London," Ed Murrow would announce—it became a sort of trade-mark; he would be standing on the roof of some building, describing the searchlights in the sky, the bombs bursting in air—sometimes you could actually hear them, as F.D.R. had done while talking with Churchill over the transatlantic telephone.

It was the genuine "all out." It went on for weeks, day and night. The Germans had decided to destroy London, the brain of the British Empire; they would break the nerve of its seven million inhabitants and end their will to resist. The Reichsmarschall, head of the Luftwaffe, had told Lanny Budd that Warsaw would be nothing in comparison; Warsaw had been far from Berlin, but London was close to the new bases in France and Belgium, and it would be merely a freighting proposition, a routine job. Impossible to miss the target, ten miles or more in every direction; no need to aim, you could drop the loads from twenty thousand feet, even thirty thousand, above the reach of ack-ack, and wipe out everything and everybody in the world's most populated metropolis.

And now they were doing it. An endless procession of planes, bombers, and fighters, by day and by night, and no rest for anybody down below. The newspapers were filled with the ghastly details; whole blocks of the city wrecked and burning, a pall of black smoke everywhere, hiding the sky and making it difficult to breathe. The firefighters worked without rest, but they could hardly get about through streets blocked with rubble; their hoses were dragged here and there through the ruins. An appalling thing to see a six-story office building collapse and fall inward, all in a few seconds,

and to know that scores, perhaps hundreds of people were trapped within those ruins; many would still be alive, and would hear the crackling flames and smell the acrid smoke and feel the deadly heat stealing closer.

The fires and the searchlights made night into day, and after a day's work people toiled at rescuing the wounded. Sirens screamed, and the roar of the anti-aircraft guns was one continuous sound, like the pounding of a freight train when you are "riding the rods." The air blasts deprived people of breath, and often killed them; there were whole districts of London without a window intact, and oftentimes a single giant blast would blow in every door in a city block. Yet people went on with their work, through all these horrors. They travelled to and fro between their homes and their jobs; they worked in shops and offices with the roofs or the walls missing; there were stories of men who set up their desks in the street and went on with their duties. Business as usual! Never say die! There will always be an England!

Lanny heard these stories, and read them in the papers, and it was as if it were his own home being destroyed. He had known this grimy old city since childhood, and loved it and the people in it. The poor were easy to know, and had "guts," as they called it, and a cheery courage; their "betters" were not so easy, but kindly and agreeable when you had broken the ice. Now they were all on a level—the bombs made no distinction. Buckingham Palace was hit, and the House of Commons wiped out. The West End, the fashionable district, suffered greatly; and Lanny thought of the splendid mansions, many of them historic, in which he had dined and danced, the luxury shops to which he had accompanied his mother in boyhood, the theatres in which he had seen Shakespeare played. Hermann Göring wouldn't spare Shakespeare; he wouldn't spare the hospitals filled with the wounded, nor the morgues in which the dead were piled. Make way for the *Neue Ordnung*!

5

Sweet Land of Liberty

I

FOR one who had just come from France and England, it was difficult indeed to realize that it was possible to have a car, and to stop at any roadside station and say: "Fill her up!"—and for no

more than a couple of dollars per load. When Lanny tried it and found that it worked, he could understand why on the Continent so many of the middle-class people he met had expressed a hope of emigrating to America. "The land of unlimited possibilities," it had been dubbed, and apparently the only limit was on tickets of admission.

Robbie Budd had half a dozen cars in his garage, and one was a sports car which Lanny was privileged to take. He drove down the shore road to the home of his half-sister Bess and her husband, Hansi Robin, the violinist; both younger than himself, both his protégés, whose love affair he had guided and whose musical career he had fostered. They were a lovely couple, and, so far as the world knew, among the happiest. But Lanny had been watching the development of a rift that was now growing to the proportions of a chasm.

They were both as much interested in political affairs as in their art; they had both called themselves Communists, up to the time of the deal between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Now Bess, a Party member, was following the Party line; this was a capitalist war, no different from any other capitalist war, and therefore every true Red must oppose it. But to Hansi, the Jew whose younger brother had been murdered by the Nazis, this point of view was beyond comprehension; to him the overthrow of Hitler was the first step toward sanity in the world. Even if it had to be done by Winston Churchill! They had tried to convince each other, and found that they could only quarrel. So they had made a rule and never spoke of politics in each other's presence. Not even when Lanny Budd came calling!

They talked about the family at Bienvenu, and the one at Wickthorpe; they talked about Rick and Alfy—and of course that led to the war, and how it was going, and what Lanny had seen in France. That came close to politics, so Bess exclaimed: "You must see the babies!" Two lovely little ones, half Jewish, half New England Puritan—strains which were spiritually not so far apart. The Puritan grandfather of Lanny and Bess had hammered the Old Jewish Testament into them as the authentic and imperative word of God. The lessons hadn't had much effect on Lanny, so far as he could see, but they had prepared his half-sister to receive the rigid orthodoxy of Marx-Leninism—that, too, being half Jewish, and in line with the Old Testament proletarian prophets. A curious thing to trace the currents of thought and impulse sweeping from one nation and one race to another, all over the world, generation after generation, millennium after millennium!

Near by was the home of Hansi's father, Johannes Robin, whose mansion in Berlin now belonged to Hermann Göring, and whose art works, selected by Lanny Budd, now hung on the walls of Karinhall.

Johannes ran the sales department of Budd-Erling, which was in New York; since the product sold itself, he now put his shrewd mind on the study of contracts and the search for scarce materials. He met many people and picked up information which could be of value to a P.A. Lanny spent a week-end with him and his family, and ate *gefuellte Fisch* and *Blintzes* and other Jewish foods. Mama Robin was one of half a dozen old ladies who adored him and yearned to see him married and the father of many little ones, all as handsome and elegant as himself. With them lived Rabel, Freddi Robin's widow who had remarried; Mama had adopted the new husband and the new children, because she couldn't bear to be separated from Freddi's child, the little Johannes. They were a group of refugees who had been lashed by the Nazi terror, and were glad to be alive on any terms. They clung together, and shuddered when they thought of that wicked Old World overseas, now trampled under the hoofs of the dread four horses of the Apocalypse.

II

In the *Bluebook* magazine, which Lanny watched each month, he had found what he expected, a short story signed "Mary Morrow." Its title was an odd one, *The Gauleiter's Cousin*. It was little more than a sketch, showing what had come to be the manners and morals of the "New Order" which Adolf Hitler had established. It had been written with an acid pen, and obviously by someone who had lived there. The locale was a small *pension*, whose ruling spirit, the star boarder of the establishment, held this position because she was a cousin of the ruling Nazi politician of the town. A greedy and vicious-tempered woman, she queened it over the other guests, and even the couple who owned and ran the *pension*. Never did she lose an opportunity to boast of the powers of her upstart relative, and to call attention to his ability to reward those who pleased his cousin and to punish those who displeased her.

In carefully studied detail the writer showed this mean and petty spirit, flattered and fawned upon, claiming precedence everywhere and especially at the dining-table; the *pension* was a little miniature of Hitlerland, with its greeds, its sham glories, its raging jealousies and servile fears. The climax of the story had to do with a trunk belonging to the Gauleiter's cousin. The undernourished slave of the establishment who undertook to carry it up from the basement to the star boarder's room stumbled and fell, and both the trunk and the railing of the stairs were damaged. The man was damaged, too, but nobody thought about him; he was to be made to pay for both trunk and

railing, and the question was which took precedence. A quarrel resulted between the landlady and her guest, but in the end the power of the Gauleiter's name swept everything before it—just as it was sweeping the Continent of Europe, with the rest of the world watching in awe.

Even if there had been no name signed to this story, Lanny would have known that only one person could have written it; that was Laurel Creston, who was Reverdy Holdenhurst's niece and Lizbeth's first cousin. She had lived in just such a *pension*, only it had been in Berlin instead of in a small provincial town. She had come to dislike the Nazis in that special way, and had brought to the study of them that shrewd observant eye and malicious humour. Lanny had read half a dozen sketches in the same vein, and his admiration for them was based upon his own knowledge of the locale.

There had been a duel going on in his mind for the past couple of years, having to do with his desire for the company of this brilliant woman writer. His conscience told him that he had no right to know her; she was an outspoken person, and bound to become conspicuous, more so with every product of her pen; the Nazi agents who swarmed in New York—never so thickly as now—were bound to seek her out and watch her, to find out where she got her information. From the point of view of a presidential agent she was poison.

But Lanny Budd was lonely. There wasn't a single person in this great city to whom he could talk frankly; indeed there was only one person in the world to whom he could speak with complete openness, and that was his Boss. With all others, even his relatives and best friends, there were shades and degrees, there were subjects he must shy away from. He had always been a ladies' man, yet most of the women he met now were in the enemy's camp. His half-sister was his only real woman friend in this country, and Rick's wife his only real woman friend in England; on the whole Continent there was only Raoul's wife, and Lanny hadn't seen her for a long time.

At first Laurel Creston had assumed him to be what he pretended to be among his mother's friends, an esthete, an ivory-tower dweller—only she had preferred to call him a troglodyte. Later she had decided that he must be a Fascist agent, and she had thought it her duty to investigate him. Only after she had got into trouble in Naziland and he had helped her to get out had she made the right conjecture about him. She had pledged her word never to mention him, and she was the sort of person to keep a promise.

Another tie, also; Laurel had discovered herself to be a medium, and she had promised to continue her experiments and report. In a decade of search Lanny had come upon only one medium whom he trusted, and here was another. He would have liked nothing better

than to settle down somewhere and probe this woman's subconscious mind, which appeared to be entirely different from the personality she presented to the world and to herself. Apparently it was all mixed up with his own mind, and with Laurel's deceased grandmother's, and—oddest thing imaginable—with the mind of the late Otto H. Kahn, senior partner of Kuhn, Loeb and Company, one of the great international banking houses in New York. If Napoleon Bonaparte or the Emperor Charlemagne had turned up in Laurel Creston's subconscious mind, she could not have been more taken by surprise.

She was living in an apartment hotel and had sent Lanny her address; all he had to do was to call her on the telephone, and that appeared such a simple and harmless action. He had promised himself that he wouldn't; but that was before he came upon *The Gauleiter's Cousin*. The reading of this started him to arguing with himself once more. After all, they had got away with it right under the nose of the Gestapo; and here in New York you could come and go freely, and didn't have to register with the police or anything of the sort. So why not?

III

"This is Bienvenu," he said, and she exclaimed: "Oh, good!" He asked: "Will you have lunch with me?" and gave her the name of a little Hungarian restaurant on lower Second Avenue. They had lunched at such a place in Berlin, and it would remind them of old times.

Was that why she was wearing a blue and white print dress, similar to the one she had worn on those two occasions? It couldn't have been the same one, for she had left her trunk and everything else when she had fled from the attentions of the German police. She was a small person, quick in her motions, and he thought of her as bird-like; he knew that she was thirty-two, that revelation having come in the course of experiments with hypnotism. She had nice brown eyes and hair, and he thought she was quite pretty; but what really interested him was the alert intelligence that operated in that small head. She observed everything that was going on, and remembered it, and understood it in relation to other events; she was serious and attentive to his discourse, but then would come a flash of humour, of teasing perhaps, and he would be a bit afraid of her, as every heavy-footed man-at-arms has need to be of any quick-darting Amazon archer.

They sat opposite each other at a little table and ate golden-brown veal goulash and drank red wine, and nobody knew them or paid any

special attention to them. Even so, they kept off the subject of world politics. Lanny told her the news from his mother's home, where she had been a guest for quite a while; he told her about Parsifal's latest experiments, and what Madame had produced as purporting to come from Laurel's deceased grandmother. She said: "How strange! I tried an experiment with a woman friend here, and Grandmother came—at least, she said she was Grandmother—and told me she had known of my escape from Germany and congratulated me. It was embarrassing, because I didn't want this friend to know anything about my having been in trouble there. I laughed and said it was nothing, that I had lost my passport. I decided it was too dangerous to go on with those experiments; I didn't know what might come up next."

Lanny told her: "It will hurt you with the smart crowd in this town if you let them know about your mediumship. They will call it 'fooling with spooks,' and be sure you must be slightly cracked. It is so much easier to be ignorant than to go against the prejudices of your time, whatever they may be. Here you will meet intellectuals who call themselves Marxists but haven't read Marx, and others, or perhaps the same ones, who call themselves Freudians but haven't read Freud. They are quite certain that Freud discovered the sub-conscious mind, and they know nothing about the patient research that had been done before Freud was born. If you tell them that their master became convinced of the reality of telepathy before he died, they will look at you with incredulity."

"I don't go among them very much," declared the woman. "Tell me your own conclusions. Do you believe that my grandmother had anything to do with these communications?"

"My dear Laurel," he replied, "it is most awkward to have to say 'I don't know,' but that is the way matters stand with me. I don't know what my mind is now; I don't know how it came to be, and I can't form any idea what it may be after my body has turned to dust. You know that your own mind makes up stories, and persists in doing it even while you are asleep. That mind might be working in secret, making up an imitation grandmother, and gathering information about her from your memories, and from everything you have ever known, and possibly from other minds, living or dead. It will take the research and study of scientists, perhaps for centuries, to answer the question. I picture our minds as bubbles floating on an infinite ocean of mind-stuff, and when we break, we go back to that ocean, and we know everything, or perhaps nothing—who can guess?"

"Sometimes," said Laurel Creston, "I decide that it is an intolerable outrage that we should be put here so ignorant, and so helpless to remedy our ignorance."

"Still worse," smiled Lanny, "is to be sure that we know so much when we know so pitifully little."

IV

He took her to his car and said : "Would you enjoy a drive ?" Who wouldn't on a lovely afternoon of sunshine with the first hint of autumn in the air ? He took her across one of the East River bridges and through an avenue of Brooklyn, lined with shops and crowded with traffic ; before long it had become a wide boulevard, leading into the farming country of Long Island.

They were free now to talk about the dreadful thing that was going on across the seas. One of the great decisions of history was being fought out, Lanny opined ; but his companion said : "I cannot think about anything but the young men being killed, and the children and old people buried or burned alive."

"History is a dreadful thing, at whatever point you take it," he replied ; "but some points are worse than others, and some decide for better or worse over long periods of time. The defeat of the Spanish Armada decided whether we should have Shakespeare, and freedom of conscience, and parliaments and constitutions—everything that England means to you and me. This battle will decide whether there is to be any more England, or whether its children will be taught to walk the goose-step and *heil* Hitler."

"I know. I have to fight with myself to keep that in mind. How is it going ?"

"I have been making note of the reports, and have observed that the daylight raids are becoming less frequent and the night raids more so. That is an acknowledgment of failure on the Germans' part. They have lost as many as two hundred planes in a single daylight raid, and they can't keep that up."

"But night raids can destroy London !"

"They are far less effective, because it is impossible to pick the targets. It doesn't do much good to drop bombs on Hampstead Heath or in the Thames."

"But in the long run——"

"That is one of the questions to be decided—whether there will be any long run. The British will work out methods of defence against any form of attack—if they have time enough."

"What defence can there be against bombs dropped out of the darkness ?"

"It is all very secret and I can only pick up hints. The German bombers start fires at strategic places by daylight, and then use them

as targets by night. The British trick them by starting great bonfires just outside the city. Also, you may notice that you don't hear so much about searchlights as you did ; the reason is that they betray the location of a city. I am told that the British have an electronic device which determines the altitude of planes in the darkness ; so they can put up a box barrage and get many of the enemy ; the greater the number that come, the more will be hit. I have heard hints that they have developed night-fighters which use the same electronic instruments. Be sure the Nazis haven't all the scientists on their side."

"Oh, God ! Shall we never see the day when science will not be working at wholesale destruction ?"

Such was the conversation of men and women in these days. The men for the most part had their thoughts on winning a tough fight ; but the women thought about their sons and lovers, or those of other women. Lanny remarked : "I had a woman friend, a German Socialist whom the Nazis murdered. She had a phrase : 'It was a bad time to be born.'"

V

At one of the many villages they turned off towards the south shore. At a rise in the land the ocean came into view, and Lanny stopped the car. In the distance was a lovely rolling landscape with clumps of trees, and among them you could see part of a structure big enough to have been a hospital or hotel. Lanny pointed, and said : "I thought it might amuse you to see where I lived for long periods, off and on. This is the first time I have seen it in several years."

"What is it ?" she asked, and he told her : "It is called Shore Acres, and I used to say it ought to be Shore Miles. It was built by the late J. Paramount Barnes, utilities king of Chicago, whom you may have heard of."

"Oh !" she said with a suggestion of apology. "I didn't take it for a private residence."

"I did," he smiled. "Later I took the palace of a *duc* in Paris, and then a villa next door to a castle in England. Then Irma took the castle—and the earl who owned it."

"It must have been an odd sort of life," she replied. Was she a little bit shocked because he had driven her here and brought up this subject ? A lady from Baltimore who had been strictly reared was continually being shocked by things she encountered in New York, to say nothing of Berlin and the French Riviera. However, she told herself that she was a writer of fiction first and a practitioner of etiquette second.

Lanny, who had learned about Baltimore as a boy through old Mrs. Sally Lee Sibley, mother of Emily Chattersworth, could read her thoughts. Said he: "It is a story which might be valuable to you as local colour. It is the sort of thing the public eats up."

If she had been really on the job, she would have said: "Tell me now." Instead, she remarked: "It is hard for me to imagine your being happy in that very extravagant world."

"I wasn't happy, but I've always been a pliable sort of person, and I let the ladies guide me. They told me I was the most fortunate man on earth, and I tried to believe it was so. Only four years have passed since I got out, but it seems like an age. I have a different sort of boss now—a man. I have to do what I am told, and it is impossible for me to have much life of my own."

She wondered: Was that what he had brought her out here to tell her? Subtle persons have the advantage of being able to recognize subtlety when they meet it, but they are at a disadvantage in that they sometimes suspect subtlety where it doesn't exist, or where, at any rate, it isn't operating. She didn't want to seem curious on the subject so she inquired: "What has become of this estate?"

"It was put on the market and bought by someone whose name I haven't troubled to remember. One of the amazing things about this country of ours is the number of persons who possess great fortunes and whom no one has ever heard of. They turn up in the most unexpected places; they have five, ten, twenty, perhaps fifty million dollars; nobody knows how they got it, and often they don't care to tell. They are perfectly commonplace looking and acting, and they don't seem to have the remotest idea what to do with their wealth; they just reinvest their income and let it go on piling up. I remember somewhere hearing about a dingy couple from California wandering into the office of the president of some university, Yale, or perhaps it was Chicago. They said they had money and thought it might be a good idea to found a university, if they could find somebody to tell them how to begin. The man was a railroad man, he said, and his name was Leland Stanford. In the end he put up twenty million dollars."

VI

Lanny drove again, turning inland. It was a district of palatial estates with elaborate bronze gates, high fences with metal spikes turned outward, or walls of stone with broken glass bottles cemented into the top. Sometimes you couldn't see the houses from the road; but in one case there was a view, and Lanny stopped the car and pointed to a super-elegant mansion of brownstone with many gables,

and extremely elaborate Italian gardens. Said he: "That was the home of a very dear friend of yours."

"You must be joking," she replied. "I don't have any such friend."

"It is your subconscious friend, Otto Kahn," he chuckled. "The place is said to have cost three millions, and to have been sold for about a fourth of that amount."

"It must have broken his heart," she commented, "assuming that he knows about it!"

"We'll try a seance, and tell him!"

"What a curious thing to think about, Lanny! Suppose he really does exist and that he knows what we are saying about him!"

"We must be careful, for he was a distinguished person, and accustomed to be treated with deference. He had charming and gracious manners, but he never forgot that he was a prince of the blood—or the blood money, should I say?"

They drove on. It was a pleasant way to spend an afternoon, and Lanny knew this district by heart, having raced about it with Irma and her swagger friends to dinners and dances, tennis and golf and polo parties, the race tracks and yachting regattas. This was the playground of the second and third generations of Wall Street speculators and department-store magnates, newspaper publishers, bankers, landlords, every sort of big business which serves the great metropolis, or plunders it—according to one's point of view. Lanny told funny stories about events he had witnessed among them, or that he had heard. He had no doubt that in the course of a few months he would find the atmosphere and ideas of the Long Island sporting set portrayed in one or more magazine stories. He had told her that the public would eat it up.

Twilight was falling when they came back to the great city. The bridges were quadruple strings of lights, and the city itself was a magical thing, a fairy spectacle to be compared only with the stars in the sky above. "You can't imagine how strange it seems after London," he remarked; "after having groped your way about in utter blackness, and knowing that you risked your life every time you stepped off a curb."

"We may see the same thing here before this war is over," said Laurel; and in this he concurred.

"History has always fascinated me," declared the amateur philosopher. "One reason is that we know all the answers; we know the things which were hidden from the people of that time. I often think how interesting it would be to bring some of them back and let them see what has come after them. For example, to put the score of

Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* in front of Beethoven, and watch his expression while he ran through it ! ”

“ Or let him listen to one of our swing orchestras,” suggested Laurel. “ He would die again, I imagine.”

VII

Lanny drove to her apartment house, not stopping in front of it but letting her out just around the corner. When he started to explain she said : “ You don't need to say anything. I understand completely. I haven't told a soul that I have met you, and I won't mention this afternoon. I have had a delightful time, and whenever you have leisure again, do give me a ring.” No lady from Baltimore could say more.

He went off thinking about her, and it was the old story, only more so. He, too, had had a good time, and would have been glad to have more of the same ; he wondered about her, what was in her mind, or her heart, or whatever it is in women. He knew them well, and strongly doubted whether this serene and even-tempered lady was entirely absorbed in producing miniature masterpieces of fiction. He didn't believe she thought about nothing but the war and who was going to win it ; or about her own subconscious mind, what it was and how it was and what would become of it when her visible part had turned to dust. She had met an eligible man whom she liked, and of course she was thinking about whether she loved him, or whether she would like to love him, and whether she would like him to love her.

Nature has played a trick upon man, making him complementary to woman, so that his thoughts dovetail into hers. Lanny Budd was thinking : I wonder if I love her ; I wonder if I would like to love her ; I wonder if she would like me to love her. He didn't mean to be condescending about the matter ; it was just that he was the lord of creation, and accustomed to wander over the earth at his sweet will, picking and choosing.

There could be no doubt that he found pleasure in her company. She was a good listener, and appreciative of his intellectual gifts. She was interested in the same things as himself, and so far she had never failed to recognize his authority. But at the same time he was a little bit afraid of her mind as it had been revealed in her writings. Could it possibly be that in her secret soul she was looking at him with the same satirical questioning she had applied to the guests of the Pension Baumgartner in Berlin ? And if she were ever to turn that loose on him, how would he like it ?

In that *Hauptstadt* of Naziland he had saved her from what might

have been an unpleasant experience, and during this process of saving she had been frightened and humble; he, knowing the situation in the country, had been the master and she had bowed to his authority. But could he expect that to continue indefinitely—a relationship so contrary to her nature, and to the matriarchal nature of American society? If he were to marry her—just supposing—she would come to know his weaknesses as well as his virtues, and some day, sooner or later, he would pick up a copy of the *Bluebook* and find in it a husband-and-wife story which he would recognize!

Lanny recalled Nietzsche's saying that when you are considering marriage, the question is whether or not you will be interested in the woman's conversation every morning at breakfast for the rest of your life. Lanny decided that he knew the answer; he would take two newspapers every morning and he would read one and Laurel the other; then, perhaps, they would exchange. It made an agreeable domestic scene, and the imagining of it warmed his heart like the cup of hot coffee he would be drinking. But then he thought: Suppose they should come to differ in their ideas about world affairs, as Hansi and Bess had done? Suppose, for example, that she wanted to read the *Daily Worker* while he was reading the *New Leader*? Suppose she couldn't even bear to see the label of his paper held up before her eyes!

The answer to all that appeared to be Lizbeth Holdenhurst. The thought of this lovely girl came like balm to his wounded spirit; she was a soft cushion upon which his thoughts could always rest. Lizbeth would never trouble him with any criticism; she would never concern herself about what he was reading, she wouldn't know where the *New Leader* was leading or what the *Daily Worker* was working at, daily including Sundays. Lizbeth would never weary of his conversation and never cease to think of him as the most wonderful man in the world.

When Lanny had these thoughts, he told himself that it was his lower nature which was tempted by this daughter of ease and luxury, this princess of parasites. He wanted his vanity flattered, his sensuality made comfortable. But no, that was only part of it; Lizbeth was kind, and as good as she knew how to be; and surely youth and beauty are not entirely superfluous in the scheme of things. Lizbeth represented the philoprogenitive instinct operating within him, so he told his learned self; she would make a perfect mother, and her children would be as lovely as herself. But didn't nature want brains as well as body? Or was it that nature didn't know anything about brains, and it was up to man to choose this higher gift, even though it was less comfortable, less safe—and less agreeable at the breakfast table?

Robbie Budd, discussing the daughter of the Holdenhursts, had said in his frank and hearty way: "If you ask me, I'd grab Lizbeth, and do all my analysing of the situation afterwards." That was what Robbie had done in the case of Mabel Blackless, alias Beauty; and the result of his prompt efficient action had been Lanny Budd. Could it be that somewhere in the realm of the about-to-be there was a Lanny junior, clamouring to come into the world? If he came through Lizbeth he would be handsome and hearty, while if he came through Laurel he might be small but mentally active. Which would Lanny choose? These biological controversies kept bringing back to his mind the words of the old English song: "How happy could I be with either were t'other dear charmer away!"

VIII

"Back to business!" commanded the stern voice of duty. The P.A. would have liked nothing better than to take Laurel Creston for another drive and show her, say, the beautiful Berkshire country, where the hills had acquired their autumnal tints; or the valley of the Hudson, along the Palisades and up to where the Squire of Krum Elbow maintained the so-called "summer White House." But no, he had to call up a man whose very guts he hated, Forrest Quadratt, who called himself the most patriotic of Americans and was Hitler's most highly paid propagandist in the New World. All that Lanny had to do was to ring, and he would be invited to an elegant apartment on Riverside Drive, to meet some Junker Nazi or some wealthy American who was a sucker for the job of saving the world from Bolshevism.

There had been a letter waiting for Lanny at Newcastle saying: "I want very much to see you; have something special in mind." So when he telephoned, the ex-poet exclaimed: "Oh, I'm so glad! Could you come up to dinner? I'll break another engagement."

The fashionable Lanny Budd, who was staying at the Ritz-Waldorf, treated himself to the luxury of a walk. Really there wasn't much use in having a car in New York City, especially in the crowded hours toward evening; you got caught in the traffic of Fifth Avenue and crept along more slowly than a brisk pedestrian. The well-to-do had forgotten how to use their legs, but Lanny had walked on the shore paths of the Mediterranean, and along the lanes of England, and in the Tiergarten, and here in a park which had been miraculously preserved in the middle of Manhattan Island. It was badly needed by seven million inhabitants who were in danger of slow suffocation.

On this rocky soil had once been forests, and Indians hunting deer

and wild turkeys with bows and arrows. Up this great river the tiny ship of Henry Hudson had sailed, seeking a passage to the Far East and certain that this must be it. The white men had bought the island from the Indians for twenty-four dollars' worth of goods, and had cut down the forests and blasted the rocks and covered the twelve-mile island with hundreds of long narrow canyons having walls of brownstone and granite and floors of asphalt and concrete. The inhabitants had become a new breed of troglodytes, cave-dwellers, or one might better say box-dwellers; their children hardly knew what horses and cows looked like, and assuredly had never seen a deer or a wild turkey unless it was in the Bronx Park Zoo. Literally thousands of boxes were piled together, all numbered so that you could find the one you wanted, and the canyons also numbered for the same reason. Both boxes and canyons were bright by night as well as by day, and it was a fascinating thing to walk and observe the variety of human types that had sought refuge on this small island: more Jews than in Jerusalem, more Italians than in Rome, more Greeks than in Athens, more Negroes than in many an African nation.

So Lanny strolled up Fifth Avenue with its shops exhibiting diamond tiaras and double ropes of pearls, tiny bottles of perfume for which you might pay as much as a hundred dollars, coats of sable and blue fox and chinchilla that might stand you in many thousands; every form of seduction with which a woman might tempt a man, and elegant limousines in which they might be sped away to a rendezvous. The luxury trades had gradually worked their way up Fifth Avenue, crowding the millionaires from the palaces, and even the gods from their temples. The traffic poured out grey fumes, unpleasant to the lungs, so Lanny was glad when he got into the wide spaces of Central Park, and from there to the splendid view of Riverside Drive and the sunset over the Hudson.

IX

Lanny Budd was ill-equipped for a secret agent in one respect: he found so much difficulty in believing evil of human beings. He had seen a lot of it, but that hadn't changed his nature. He would go off and think about the person he had talked with, trying to find excuses for him, to figure out what particular set of circumstances, what unhappy experiences, had made him the deformity he was. So now, confronting this German-American casuist with the pale, pasty face, the thick-lensed eyeglasses, the soft rapid voice, and the gentle, even deprecating manner—what had caused him to tie himself to the tail of the wild Nazi kite? Desire for money? But he was an able writer,

and would never have had difficulty in earning his share. Vexation because he had thought himself a great poet and the critics had not given him the attention he demanded? Ambition, a craving for power? Had he made up his mind that Adolph Hitler was really going to conquer the world, and that Forrest Quadratt might become the Dr. Goebbels of the western hemisphere, or the Gauleiter of New York, or both?

This much Lanny had made sure of: this not too robust and by no means attractive-looking little man had really taken up the notion of the *Herrenrasse*, and was certain that he belonged to a superior grade of being. He was said to be an illegitimate grandson of one of the Kaisers, and perhaps that was the source of his craving to exercise authority. He was American-born, and tireless in calling himself an American and a believer in democracy, but that was pure camouflage, his stock in trade; all his ideas and tastes were those of an aristocrat, as were his habits, so far as circumstances permitted.

The dominating motive of his life, it seemed to Lanny, was hatred of the British Empire. The English aristocrats considered themselves the ruling race, and everywhere snubbed and insulted the Germans. The English had got there first and grabbed the best parts of the earth, and thought they had them forever, and by divine right. Everywhere they blocked off the Germans and surrounded them—*die Einkreisung*—and by superior cunning had been able to bamboozle the United States into fighting their wars. The ex-poet's lifeless complexion became flushed when he spoke of how his native land had intervened to snatch the prize of victory from Germany's grasp in World War I, and now he was labouring with fury to make certain that this should not happen a second time.

To that end he had written a shelf full of books under various pseudonyms. To that end he had composed speeches for congressmen and senators, had had them delivered, printed in the Congressional Record, and then mailed out under congressional frank all over the land. To that end he had collected money from wealthy Germans and Irish, from pacifists, mothers, and every sort of person who wanted to keep America out of war. He had helped in causing the White House to be picketed, Congress to be besieged, and mass meetings and parades to be organized all over the land. He was in deadly earnest about all this, but he had a cynical humour, too, and to the son of Budd-Erling, an insider, he laughed over the foibles of the people he had fooled.

Next to Britain, his special hatred was for Franklin D. Roosevelt. Lanny thought as he listened: Roosevelt is too clever for him! Roosevelt has tricks in his bag, too! In the ex-poet's view the President was carrying the country straight into war, and doing it by a series of

deceptions. To beat him at the impending election was second in a German's mind only to having the Luftwaffe win the war of the skies over London. He asked Lanny's opinion as to the chances in both these conflicts, and listened with eager attention to what his visitor had seen and learned in France. An extraordinary thing that a man should have strolled out and fallen in with the German Army and had several chats with its Führer; still more than he should tell about it in offhand, casual fashion, as if it were a most ordinary thing that anybody could have done if he had been interested enough in world affairs!

X

There came to this party another guest, a shaven-headed, middle-aged gentleman introduced as Baldur Heinsch, and said to be an official of one of the German steamship lines. He was, according to Quadratt, worthy of all trust; and he must have been told the same thing about the son of Budd-Erling. He talked freely, and, after they had drunk some wine and brandy, he assured Lanny that he held him in high esteem, and that he might speak to him as a trusted friend. First, he wanted to know if Lanny knew the publisher Hearst and when Lanny said No, he countered: "The more I think about it, the more it seems to me that you are the man who might best be able to influence him."

"What do you want him to do?" inquired the false friend.

"First of all, to realize more than he does at present the desperate nature of this crisis, and to make more determined efforts to stave it off."

"I have been reading his papers, and it seems to me he is doing about everything a publisher could do to help us."

"But not as a man, Herr Budd. He has such great resources, and immense personal influence. If he wanted to, he could make all the other publishers print our side of the case—I mean, he could make news of it. But he sits off in that castle he has built in California and contents himself with sending telegrams instructing his editors about the make-up of to-morrow's front page."

"He's quite an old man, isn't he?"

"Seventy-seven; but he comes of a tough breed. Those western pioneers had to be; the weaklings were eliminated. May I speak to you in the strictest confidence, Herr Budd?"

"Always of course."

"Do you think we have a chance to beat Roosevelt?"

"I don't know, Herr Heinsch. My job is overseas. When I come back here I can only ask other people's opinions."

"What does your father think?"

"My father and I are not on very good terms at present. He is making warplanes, and not thinking about anything else. Naturally, I find that repugnant, and I cut my visits short. Newcastle belongs to the merchants of death, and politics is out for the duration."

"There you have it! The thing is spreading like a forest fire—a fire of greed. Roosevelt has persuaded Congress to vote twelve billion dollars for war preparations, and every dollar is a bribe to some business-man to reduce his opposition to our involvement. If we get into it, it will cost us a hundred billion, two hundred, five hundred—nobody can make a guess. The last war won't be a circumstance in comparison."

"I agree with you about all that. It is a most dreadful thing."

"That's why my thoughts turn to Hearst. He is the most powerful single personality we have on our side. He has more money than all the people I know put together."

"I thought he was in serious financial straits."

"That doesn't mean anything to a man like him. Maybe he has lost ten million, twenty million; but he has hundreds of millions; he owns more New York real estate than any other one person; his income would finance a dozen crusades to save America."

"I read that he had had to sacrifice some of his papers, and that he had lost control of the whole set-up."

"The financial control, but not the editorial. A syndicate handles the business end, but he still gets his share, don't fool yourself."

"What, precisely, do you have in mind for him to do?"

"First of all, to realize the emergency we face. If Roosevelt is re-elected, it means we enter the war, as certain as anything on this earth—unless we do something revolutionary."

"Speak frankly, Herr Heinsch. You can count on me."

"We Americans have got ourselves hypnotized by the idea of elections. We think that votes settle everything, votes come from God. But Hitler and Mussolini have shown us that governments are not immutable, and that the rabble doesn't have to have its way."

Long practice had taught a P.A. never to show any surprise; and besides, he didn't feel so very much. "You'd be cheered if you knew how many people are talking about that idea, in the locker rooms of all the country clubs."

"You have heard it, then?"

"No end of it; I had in mind to ask you about it. Their favourite formula is: "Somebody ought to shoot him!"

"I don't mean anything so extreme. Assassination would have a bad effect and might lead to reaction. All that is necessary is for a group of determined men to lead him away and keep him in some

quiet spot until the trouble is over. Somebody should state: 'You are still President, Mr. Roosevelt, but you're not working at it for a time. The country is going to be run by men who are sane, and don't intend to have their sons shot for the benefit of the British Empire and Bolshevik Russia.' The men in this plan are all Americans, Herr Budd."

"That is really interesting news, sir; and if anything of the sort is to be done, you can count upon my co-operation. You won't want to name your friends, and please note that I'm not asking. I understand how confidential such a matter has to be."

"That is fine of you, Herr Budd, and the attitude I expected you to take. The question is: Would you be willing to go and see Hearst and try to persuade him to give us real help before it is too late? Assure him that wealthy Americans alone are involved."

"But how can I sound a man out on matters like that, Herr Heinsch? He wouldn't dream of speaking openly with a stranger."

"You wouldn't go as a stranger: I would furnish you with introductions from several highly influential men who would vouch for you. You would have to take a little time, of course, and get acquainted with the old gentleman. You have special equipment for handling him, because you are an art authority and he is the world's greatest art collector; also, you are Hitler's friend, and Hearst has met the Führer, and I know how tremendously he has been impressed. There won't be anything novel in the ideas you present to him, I am certain."

XI

Lanny said that he couldn't give an offhand decision on a matter of such importance. He promised to think it over, and this promise he kept. What determined his thinking was the unceasing air war over the British Isles. There was a limit to the amount of radio listening and newspaper reading that anyone could stand. One day it was seventy-five enemy planes shot down and the next day it was only fifty; in either case it meant little, because you couldn't be sure if the figures were correct, and you didn't know how many planes either side had, or what was their replacement capacity. You read the news that this or that district of London had been hit, this or that landmark destroyed; but there was nothing you could do about it, and the agonies of your imagination wouldn't help a single one of the unfortunates "sticking it" in damp and chilly cellars and tunnels underground.

The members of Lanny's family begged him not to go back under those bombs. What could he accomplish there? When he asked

himself the question, he couldn't find an answer. Adi Schicklgruber had revealed all there was to reveal; he would invade Britain when his preparations were complete. The British people knew that, and were getting ready for him to the best of their ability; meantime, all the world had to wait. The air war was part of Adi's preparation, and so long as it continued, you could be sure that *Der Tag* was not tomorrow. Until this was decided, there would be nothing important for a P.A. to do overseas.

Lanny thought: I have never seen my own country. His fortieth birthday was at hand, and he had never been farther west than Chicago. He thought: If we get into this war, it may not be so easy to travel. He found himself thinking of the great plains, the Rocky Mountains, and above all California, which has an advantage over the rest of the world in having the movie industry for its publicity department. Lanny could have flown there in a day and night, but what lured him was the thought of stepping into a car and driving for a solid week. Long-distance motoring had been one of his recreations since early manhood, and now Hitler and his war had ruined it in Europe.

Then another thought, a mousy little thought, stealing silently into his mind: How pleasant it might be to have Laurel Creston along on such a trip! How many things they would find to talk about, and how greatly his appreciation of the scenery would be enhanced by her comments! They had taken such a tour in Germany, keeping out of touch with the Gestapo; a semicircular tour of Central and Western Germany, starting in Berlin and stopping at Berchtesgaden, and then out by way of Austria and Switzerland. A tour that had surely not been forgotten by either of them!

He imagined himself calling her up and saying: "Have you ever seen your own country, and would you like to see it?" It would be a strictly proper, brother-and-sister tour, like the previous one, and he would make that plain in delicate, well-chosen words. They would stay in different hotel rooms, even in different hotels if she preferred. To be sure, none of her friends would believe it; but there was no reason why her friends should know about it. The project concerned themselves alone.

Lanny's imagination had always been active, and now, for some reason, it became even more so; it was interested in playing with this theme and in composing variations, a diversion familiar to all musicians. The same theme can be grave or gay, minor or major; it can be played with various instruments and in various tempos. Lanny's imagination decided to dispense with the separate rooms, or to make them part of one suite; he pictured himself calling up Laurel Creston and saying abruptly: "How would you like to marry me and have a honeymoon in California?" The women have a

stock answer to such inquiries: "This is so sudden!" Now and then one of them may aspire to be original and say: "Well, it's about time!"

Lanny had no idea what the real Laurel Creston would respond, but his musical fancy was delighted with this theme. She said "Yes" in various modes, and they had a most enjoyable holiday. New Jersey lies just across the river, and on the route to California; Lanny had heard that you could get married there without any preliminaries, and so they did, in his imagination, and it was a heart-warming experience. But then began the old round of problems. The journey came to an end, and they were back in New York, and what was he going to do with her then? Where would he hide her, and how would she manage to publish her satirical stories without getting the Nazi agents on her trail? As ex-husband of Irma Barnes, Lanny could still get into Hitlerland, but as husband of "Mary Morrow" he would stand an excellent chance of disappearing by way of a torture chamber and an incinerator.

There were other variations on this theme; one in Vienna waltz time, and one in Harlem swing, or the new night-club style called boogie-woogie. You didn't have to stop and hunt for a preacher or a justice of the peace in Hoboken or Weehawken. You just sped on, the world forgetting, by the world forgot. You gathered your rosebuds while you might and you took no thought for the morrow, saying what should you eat and what should you drink and wherewithal should you be clothed. You knew that you would find cocktails and sizzling hot steaks in roadhouses along the way, and as for clothes, you had them in the trunk of the car, including pink silk pyjamas, or maybe black with Chinese dragons in silver or gold. And did they cost money!

Such was the mood of the time, and you asked for what you wanted. The smart New Yorkers had a word for it, "propositioning," and the woman was not supposed to take offence; quite the contrary, she might be the one to speak, for wasn't it supposed to be a woman's world? Long ago, in France, Lanny had been "propositioned" by Isadora Duncan, and he might have accepted, only he happened to be in love with Madame de Bruyne at the time. Was he being puritanical now, and was Laurel pretending to be the same because she thought that was the way he wanted her to be?

Get thee behind me, Satan! Lanny told himself that this lady from Baltimore was a person of fine sensibilities, and that if she wanted anything from him it would be true and enduring affection. That, alas, he was not in a position to offer, and he told himself that he ought to be ashamed to think of her in ways that would humiliate and degrade her. Suppose that in one of her trances Grandmother

Marjorie Kennan were to tell her about it! And suppose Laurel were to start wondering whether this message was a product of Lanny's subconscious mind or her own!

XII

Baldur Heinsch had said: "If you are going, you ought to see Hearst's art works in the department stores and in his storerooms up in the Bronx." Lanny decided that this was sound advice in any case, so he called up his friend and art mentor, Zoltan Kertezsi. Together they visited two great department stores which, for the first time in the history of the world, had set apart whole floors for the exhibiting and selling of old masters and museum objects.

For half of a long life a headstrong master of millions had amused himself accumulating such works from all over Europe. He had employed agents to scour the Continent, and had built a huge medieval palace on the Pacific Coast to contain them. When this and its various satellite buildings could hold no more, he had constructed first one and then another enormous storehouse in that north-eastern part of Greater New York known as the Bronx. Many of these treasures the lord of San Simeon had never seen; he had bought them by cable and was content to know that they were his property, and safe from fire and thieves.

The great depression had come, affecting both circulation and advertising of newspaper chains; also the infamous New Deal had imposed huge income taxes. Hearst had had to kill some of his papers and sell others and let a trusteeship manage the rest. He had lost interest in his art treasures and decided to turn them into cash. Someone had had the bright idea of advertising and marketing them through department stores; so here you could look at rows of paintings, priced anywhere from fifty dollars to fifty thousand—and they were selling fast. Another store offered all sorts of *objets d'art*, statuary, vases, tapestries, armour, and weapons, from Venetian daggers which you could use as papercutters to huge halberds and battle-axes which only an athlete could wield. A price tag on every one, from ninety-eight cents up to ninety-eight hundred dollars!

The people of New York knew all about William Randolph Hearst, who had once run for mayor, and then for governor of the state, and had tried hard to run for President—but the people had got onto him by that time. They thought it would be fun to own something which they could say was from his collection; they were rolling in money, because ships and steel and copper and oil and food, paid for in cash, were being poured into Britain, or into the ocean on the way. And now here was Uncle Sam ordering twelve billion dollars' worth

of armaments! Why not have a little fun, and incidentally a little culture? You could save the price tag and prove what you had paid, and it was as good as money in the bank!

Heinsch had added: "If you want to see the storerooms, let me know. Several of our most active workers are employed there." So Lanny called the official and was told: "I'll telephone and arrange it. Present your card and ask for Mr. Hickenlooper." So Lanny waited at the door of a warehouse which occupied a whole city block. Through a slot which might have belonged to a speakeasy he stuck in his visiting card, and a stoutish rosy German from Yorkville appeared and invited him in.

You couldn't believe it without seeing it with your own eyes. In this place was an office with cabinets containing one hundred and fifty fat books composed of loose leaves, the catalogue of this warehouse. Ten or eleven clerks were needed to keep them up-to-date. There were twelve thousand objects listed, Lanny was told, and that didn't sound so formidable—until it was explained that an "object" included such things as a "complete medieval room," and there were seventy of these. Another "object" was a whole monastery from Spain; you might think that was a joke, but no, here it was, in fourteen thousand cases which had cost seventy thousand dollars just to pack. The monastery had been built in the year 1141, and Hearst had bought it without seeing it, and had ordered it taken down, stone by stone, each labelled on the boxes, so that the structure could be set up in any part of America which felt the need of either a monastery or a tourist attraction.

Many items were equally fantastic, and the figures staggering. There were eight million dollars' worth of tapestries—at least that was what had been paid for them. For a single set a dealer had received the sum of \$575,000; perhaps that was the money with which this celebrated personality was able to influence his elevation to the peerage. Not much fun looking at rolled-up tapestries, and one packing box looks much like another, but Lanny let himself be escorted from floor to floor. If he was going to meet the master of San Simeon it would be something to report on.

Later he called Heinsch to say Thanks. "I have to visit clients in the Middle West," he announced, "and it may be that I'll decide to continue on to California. On second thought I believe it would be better not to use introductions from your friends, because that might make it seem a political call and put the old man on his guard. I'll get some of the movie people to take me and I'll talk about art. It may even be that I can do some business for him—find him some rich clients. He'll be much more disposed to trust me if I can be the means of paying him some millions of dollars."

He called his father, saying: "Can you spare the car for three or four weeks?" The answer was: "If I need another car, I can buy one. Go ahead and enjoy yourself." Lanny understood the thought behind these words: "Anything to keep you from under the bombs!"

6

Westward the Star

I

THE first stage of the journey was through the rolling farm country of Pennsylvania; woodlands, then hills, then the Allegheny Mountains, their valleys black with coal, their slopes denuded of timber. He came to the great steel city of Pittsburgh; in its Sewickley district, which claimed to be the richest borough in the United States, dwelt Lanny's old friends the Murchisons, just back from their summer camp in the Adirondacks. Lanny had sold them an especially fine Goya, "El Comendador." This Spanish grandee had got twelve bullet holes through him in the recent war, but they had been repaired so skilfully that you couldn't find them, and it was a favourite parlour game to try. Doubtless the old gentleman had been a stuffy and tiresome person in real life, but with all his gold lace, and the collar of the Spanish Order of the Golden Fleece, he made a grand figure for the head of a staircase, and all newcomers took up eagerly the challenge to say where he had been hit.

Lanny didn't say a word about art works. He told about his adventure with the Wehrmacht in Dunkirk and Paris, about Laval's ancient château, and so on. After Harry had plied him with questions about the war and how it was going to turn out, he could be sure that Adella would ask: "Have you found anything that would interest me?" Thus invited, he would open a brief-case full of photographs and tell about one work after another, never overpraising them, but preserving his careful judicious manner. Adella would say: "I think that is lovely!" and he would counter: "It is a little old-fashioned, what the French call *vieux jeu*." The wife, who had once been a secretary and was now an ample and dignified matron, would reply: "We are all somewhat old-fashioned in this neck of the woods." He would tell her: "The price seems to me a trifle high. I might be able to get it reduced, but it would take time." To this the answer would be: "Harry is making so much money that it is a shame."

Harry had inherited the control of a plate-glass factory, and so much of his product was being smashed in London every night that, so he said, he was assured of a meal ticket for the rest of his days. Harry's waistline had increased by a considerable percentage since the days when he had tried to run away with Lanny's lovely mother at the outbreak of World War I. He had grown also in business importance, but he never tried to put on any "dog" with Lanny Budd. If his wife wanted a painting, or anything else in the world, she could have it; but Lanny would take the husband's side and try to restrain an amateur collector's ardour. This time he told about Hearst, holding him up as a terrible example of what this impulse could do when it was turned loose. But, even so, Adella ordered a painting; her choice was a Eugenio Lucas, an imitator of Goya, very good, and she said it would be fun to see if her friends could tell the difference.

II

Next came Cincinnati, home of another American family grown far too rich, this time out of hardware. These were Sophie Timmons's relatives, a lot of them, so that the government didn't get the whole fortune in income taxes. A company assembled to meet Lanny Budd, and several wanted to talk about paintings, having visited the Riviera and seen the half-dozen French masters in Sophie's villa. The older men took no stock in "foreign doodads" and guessed they were mostly "hooley"; but the ladies found Lanny Budd a delightful fresh breeze in their overgrown river town, and wished he would stay and marry their newest daughter just out of finishing school.

On to Detroit, where Mrs. Henry Ford and her son Edsel were making a modest collection, and where Henry was standing out stubbornly against the efforts of his government to persuade him to make war goods. Then to the small town of Reubens, Indiana, home of Ezra Hackabury, proprietor and retired manufacturer of Bluebird Soap; Ezra was eighty and his soap was over sixty, and both were still going strong. He had come to the Detaze show in Cleveland and bought several paintings which Marcel had done on Ezra's yacht, the *Bluebird*, and now he wanted to look at photographs of others. He was still meaning to donate them to his town library—just to spite his in-laws, he said with a grin.

And then Chicago, which to Lanny meant old Mrs. Fotheringay, who lived in a palace on the North Shore and collected babies; painted ones, of course. Every time Lanny went to Europe he would find her a new one; sometimes he would bring it along, but this time he had

had his hands full and brought only photographs. Her "darlings," she called them, and fell in love with a very delightful Hoppner, and only wanted to be sure the child had rosy cheeks. When Lanny was able to assure her of this fact, she wrote him a check for twenty-seven thousand dollars, and didn't mind trusting him to buy the painting when he could and have it shipped to her by airmail so as to be safe from the submarines.

III

That was the end of business, and the rest was play. Westward on the Lincoln Highway; now and then it made a sharp turn to avoid somebody's barn, but most of the time it went straight ahead, and sixty miles an hour was all right outside of towns. Lanny would start early and drive until after dark, with no stops except for lunch and dinner; six hundred miles a day was a comfortable stint. Illinois, and then Iowa, where once the rolling prairie had been and the buffalo and Indians had roamed. Now it was all fenced, and there were farmhouses with immense red barns—that being the cheapest kind of paint. The corn had been shucked and the stalks dumped into the great tall silos, and droves of big hogs were rooting in the fields.

Then it was Nebraska, and the road began to climb, slowly and steadily, and with every rise the land became drier and the farms poorer. This had been grazing land, but it had been ploughed for grain during the boom of the last war, and so it had become a country of dust storms, and the problem was to keep it from turning into desert. The effort was a part of the New Deal's "boondoggling," endlessly carped at by the enemies of F.D.R.

You had to see this land in order to realize the immensity of it; you had to watch it rolling by, mile after mile, with its monotony of scenery, and realize that it extended north and south many hundreds of miles. He would turn the dials of the radio in his car and get news about the air war still going on overseas; and when he stopped at filling stations, or to eat or spend the night, he would get into conversation with the people and ask what they thought about this world-shaking crisis. He discovered that to the last man and woman they had one idea, which was to keep their own country, their own sons, out of the mess. Mostly they were against Roosevelt because they suspected him of trying to get them in. Oddly enough, many were against Willkie, also, because he was beginning to talk more and more like his rival.

So came the Rockies, far ahead and high up, covered with snow; you climbed, and it was Wyoming, the great open spaces, the cattle

country; the road was a tiny grey thread, and alongside it were sloping structures like well-braced fences to keep the snow from drifting over the roads. Eight thousand feet was the altitude, and the air was crisp and bracing, but there wasn't so much of it, and if you walked it had better be slowly. Then you were in the mountains, climbing, with high peaks and canyon walls on both sides, and a clear green stream below. Snow everywhere—and you had better keep going, for you wouldn't want to be caught here by a storm.

Then down into the broad fertile plateau where old Brigham Young had looked about him and struck his staff into the ground, saying: "Build here!" It was the country of the Latter-Day Saints, whose founders had followed the Old Testament and taken many wives and replenished the earth. It hadn't pleased the other Bible-reading Americans, but it had seemed to work—if the purpose of mankind was to labour from dawn to dark and produce enormous quantities of fruit and grain and sugar beets, copper and silver, lead and zinc. It looked as if the old Mormon prophet had foreseen the automobile, for every street of his city was wide enough for diagonal parking. His Temple, begun nearly a hundred years ago, had walls of granite six feet thick and had been one of the wonders of this high mountain world.

Lanny had no clients here. He drove around for a look, spent the night, and in the morning drove on. His road turned into southern Utah, a mass of tumbled mountains, containing some of the finest scenery in the world. It is wild country, much of it inaccessible; canyons, precipices, and boulder-strewn wildernesses, with old prospectors wandering among them, leading patient burros with packloads. But you didn't see them from the road! You saw vast spaces, a land without limits, the road winding through it in broad curves, a serpent without head or tail. The rocks were of every colour, black, white, or grey, red, green, yellow, or mottled with all colours; they were of every shape, tall pinnacles, monuments, sculptured figures, huge masses that looked like fortresses or rows of office buildings in a city. No two views were the same, and the driver's eyes moved incessantly from the road to some freak of nature and then back to the road again.

Presently it was Nevada, according to a signpost, but there was little difference the motorist could observe; barren lands, red hills, with grey mountains in the dim distance, and the road winding where it could. Now and then you would see a long-legged chaparral cock, called a road runner because of its habit of trying to keep ahead of vehicles; but this didn't work with automobiles. Now and then you would see a buzzard or eagle wheeling in the sky; if you cared to stop you could make the acquaintance of lizards and rattlesnakes. It was Mary Austin's "land of little rain." Filling stations might be as much

as twenty miles apart, and you were advised to be sure that your radiator was full, since all water had to be hauled in, and its price was high. Car trouble was serious, for many wanderers had perished here in the days of covered wagons, and one ribbon of grey concrete was the only mark of civilization.

IV

Lanny crossed the Colorado River by a long bridge, and was in the California desert, near the Death Valley region. It was having a hot spell now, and he had been advised to pass through at night. He couldn't see the landscape, but judged that it must be flat and level, for the road went straight, like a great steel tape stretched taut. The car lights shone on it, far ahead, and exercised a hypnotic effect—but it was better not to nod, bowling along at a mile a minute. A hot, almost suffocating wind blew upon him and seemed to be drying the blood in his veins; doubtless he was perspiring, but there was no trace upon him. A strange thing to drive into the little town of Baker, and discover broad paved streets, and filling stations and other places ablaze with light, and realize that human beings lived in this heat, not merely by night but by day! Lanny, a considerate person, didn't want to discourage them, and forbore to ask how they stood it.

He drove until he was in the orange country. He stopped at a town called Riverside—but its river was dry; he put up at a hotel called the Mission Inn—but there was no mission, only a museum full of California curiosities. He had a good sleep, and then drove through miles and miles of orange and lemon groves, laden with golden and yellow fruit. The towns had picturesque names: Pomona, which was Latin, Azusa, which was Indian, Monrovia and Pasadena which had come out of some realtor's dream.

So he came to Hollywood, his goal for the moment, and the dream of all movie fans from China to Peru. The town had been taken into the sprawling city of Los Angeles, most of the studios had moved into the near-by valleys, and the actors had their homes everywhere but in Hollywood; so it was no longer a geographical location but merely a trade-mark. The landscape and climate reminded Lanny of the Côte d'Azur; but there he had never seen "supermarkets" with all the fruits and vegetables of the world spread out, nor "drive-in eateries" nor "hotdog stands" and "orange juiceries" built in the shape of Indian tepees or Eskimo igloos or sitting white cats or other Mother Goose or Walt Disney creations. It was, he discovered, like all California towns, built haphazard, a jumble of anybody's whims, with half its spaces empty because people were holding them, waiting for values to rise.

V

While driving, Lanny had been thinking of who in this region might serve his underground purpose. Sooner or later "everybody" came here, and many of them stayed. In the course of his life he had met journalists, writers, musicians, actors—hundreds of them in his mother's home, other hundreds while he and Irma had been playing about in café society in New York, and yet others while Irma had been playing the *salonnière* in Paris. Many he had forgotten, and many, no doubt, had forgotten him; but his memory lighted upon a couple, the De Lyle Armbrusters, who had "scads" of money and had amused themselves all over the world; he had run into them at the Savoy in London, and again at the Adlon in Berlin, and in Algiers when they had been on a yachting trip. Irma had mentioned that they had settled in Beverly Hills, and Lanny guessed that wherever they were they would know the celebrities.

He looked them up in the fat Los Angeles telephone book and there they were. He called the number, and a grave English voice answered. In smart society the only grave voice is that of the butler, so Lanny said: "Is either Mr. or Mrs. Armbruster at home?" The reply was: "Whom shall I say, sir?"—in smart society the only persons who bother with grammar are the butler and the social secretary. Lanny answered: "Tell them, please, that Mr. Lanny Budd is calling."

In half a moment more there was Genie, short for Eugenia, bubbling over with welcome. "Lanny, how perfectly ducky! Where are you?"

"I'm at the Beverly-Wilshire."

"Oh, you darling, how nice! We'll be having cocktails—won't you run over? Any time from five to seven—and stay for dinner and we'll chew the rag."

That's the way it is when you know the "right" people, you just don't have any troubles at all, unless you drink too many cocktails, or make love to your host's wife. Lanny had time to bathe and shave, and glance at an afternoon paper to see that London still survived. His clothes, freshly pressed, were brought to his door, and his car, freshly washed and serviced, was brought to the door of the hotel. The porter told him how to get to Benedict Canyon. There he found an Italian Renaissance villa of some twenty rooms, built on the side of a mountain, so that things above and below it had to be terraced and walled to keep them from sliding down. It was just like the heights above Cannes, or the place called Californie above Nice, where the Duke and Duchess of Windsor had been staying. There was a tennis court and a swimming pool, and from the loggia you looked over the

whole Los Angeles plain, the blue Pacific, and the Channel islands beyond. At night it was a vast plain, a bowl full of lights, an unequalled spectacle.

VI

Everywhere in the modern world are rich people trying to escape boredom, and willing to keep open house for anybody who can produce a novelty. If they are very rich they do it on a grand scale, and the drive in front of their home and the road outside will be lined with a double row of motor cars. Some specialize in "headliners," and go to any trouble to secure their presence. The "headliners" may be rich, too, but they have to work for their money, whereas the rich rich can make a business of hospitality. As a reward their names are always in the society columns and everybody knows who they are. De Lyle Armbruster was fiftyish and stoutish, as bland and smiling as the head-waiter in the dining-room of a "palace hotel." His wife, blonde and animated, was Lanny's age, supposedly dangerous for women; she kissed him and called him "old dear," and was as glad to see him as if he had still been Mister Irma Barnes.

All proper homes now have a private bar gleaming with chromium, or maybe platinum—who can be sure? The room will be done in jazz colours, or paintings in the surrealist style; there may be photographs signed by celebrity friends, or original copies of cartoons from the great centres of politics and culture. The guests stand about, nibble tiny sausages and other delicacies stuck on toothpicks, sip drinks with torpedo and brimstone names, and chat about the price which not more than an hour ago was paid for the picture rights of the newest best-seller, scheduled for publication next week. Or perhaps it will be the seven-year contract which the speaker has just been offered but hasn't yet decided about; or the star who has been chosen to play the role of Joan of Arc or President Wilson. So you will know that you are in Hollywood.

The first person to whom Lanny Budd was introduced was Charles Laughton, whom he had previously known as King Henry the Eighth; the second was another round-faced and beaming gentleman, Charles Coburn, whom he had seen in comedies, always as a millionaire father perplexed by the insane behaviour of his children. On the screen these personages were enlarged to godlike proportions and their voices filled a great theatre. To meet them now, reduced to ordinary size, to shake hands with them and discover that they were made of flesh and blood, was an experience like walking into the Mermaid Tavern and being presented to Will Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. How does one address such supernal beings? What can

one say, of admiration and awe, which they have not heard from a thousand autograph-hungry fans?

Lanny could say: "I saw you in Athens, and again in the town of Stubendorf, in Upper Silesia." That was slightly better. He could say to Bette Davis: "It might interest you to know that Hitler showed me *Dark Victory* in his home at Berchtesgaden." It did interest her, and she asked what the Führer had said. That was what Lanny wanted; for almost at once he became the centre of a group, plying him with questions. People in Hollywood found it as extraordinary to meet someone who had been in the same room with Hitler as Lanny found it to be in the same room with Charles Laughton and Bette Davis. How did Hitler talk, and what did he eat, and what sort of table manners did he have? Was he really quite sane? And what about his love life? Above all, was he going to be able to knock out London?

VII

At one side of the ample drawing-room was a large overstuffed chair which bore a certain resemblance to a throne, and on it sat a round-faced ample lady who bore a certain resemblance to a queen in the movies. She rarely moved, but people came to her and made obeisance and paid tribute in the form of news: what they had done that day and what they were planning to do, what their friends had done—in short all the gossip of the studios they had chanced to pick up: who was now keeping company with whom, who was expecting a baby, or a divorce, or an elopement. They were all her friends, and they all called her Louella, and all she exacted in return was that they would give her an "exclusive." Woe betide them if they ever broke faith with her on this all-important point!

It was rare indeed that anybody ever "stole the show" from this queen of publicity, and she frowned as she observed the phenomenon. To the hostess she addressed the question: "Who is that fellow that is talking so much?"

The hostess was glad to explain, for it might be worth a paragraph, and the De Lyle Armbrusters might be mentioned in it. "His name is Lanny Budd. He used to be the husband of Irma Barnes, the heiress who was the glamour girl of Broadway some ten or twelve years ago."

"I read the newspapers," replied Louella coldly.

"His father is Budd-Erling Aircraft," added the other, putting first things first. "The son is a very distinguished art expert."

"Why does everybody want to hear about art all of a sudden?"

"It isn't that, Louella. It so happens he is a personal friend of Hitler, and has recently been visiting him."

"Can that really be true?"

"He knows Göring, and Hess, and all the leading Nazis. He has been Göring's art adviser for many years. He was with them in Paris when the armistice was signed."

"Well, Genie, what is the matter with you? Why haven't you introduced him to me?"

"I didn't know whether you'd be interested, Louella. His pictures aren't the kind that move."

"Good God, am I never to talk anything but shop? And besides, the man looks like a movie actor. He'd make another Ronald Colman. Somebody ought to give him a screen test!"

The hostess needed to hear no more. She went over and broke into the circle, interrupting a description of the Berghof. "I want to introduce you to somebody," she said, and of course that was a command. Lanny followed her, and the others came along; they must have been troubled by the discourtesy they were showing to their publicity queen. "Louella Parsons," said Genie, "this is Lanny Budd."

There was one chair, placed so that one person could be seated in front of the throne. Lanny was ordered to take it, and the others ranged themselves in a circle to hear what was going to be said. Even the bar was forgotten for a time.

"They tell me you are a friend of Hitler's, Mr. Budd." The voice was surprising, that of a child—a sweet little child of ten.

"Yes," replied Lanny meekly. "I have that honour."

"Tell me, does he make a practice of having American friends?"

"I think not, Miss Parsons. So far as I know I am his only American friend."

"And how did that come about?" She didn't add "my little man," but it was exactly so that Lanny had been questioned by duchesses and ambassadors' wives when he was a lad of eight or ten.

The visitor explained, respectfully: "It happened that when I was young, one of my playmates was Kurt Meissner, who grew up to become Germany's most honoured *Komponist*. Another boy at Schloss Stubendorf became one of the Führer's earliest converts and visited him when he was in prison. The Führer never forgets any of those old-timers, and so it came about that I was brought into his circle."

"And tell me, what sort of man is he, really?"

So Lanny was launched upon one of his suave discourses. He put everything he had into it, for he knew that at this moment he was

right where he wanted to be. It was for the Hearst newspapers that Louella Parsons wrote her famous column of movie gossip, and she was one of the publisher's intimates and a frequent guest at San Simeon. It wasn't that fate had been so especially kind to Lanny, but that he had been especially careful in figuring where and how to make his Hollywood debut.

VIII

He didn't tell about his joining the German Army in Dunkirk and being taken back to the Führer's headquarters. He knew that was too much like a Hollywood story, and would discredit the rest of his statements. What he told were the little commonplace things: the Führer's vegetable plate with a poached egg on top, his law against smoking in his home, the fact that you had to appear within two minutes of the sounding of the gong for meals; his fondness for Wagner's music, his insistence that all the women servants and secretaries had to be young Aryan blondes, so different from himself; his fondness for his old Munich companions, such as Herr Kannenberg, the fat little man who had been a *Kellner* and was now Adi's steward, and played the accordion for him in the evening, and sang "*Ach, du lieber Augustin*" and dialect songs from the Inn valley where the son of Alois Schicklgruber had been born. He explained Adi's propaganda technique of choosing a big lie and repeating it incessantly until everybody believed it; he told the story of the *Stierwäscher* of the Innthal—the peasants who had wanted to enter a white bull in a prize competition, but they had no white bull, so they took a black one and washed it every day for a month and then insisted that it was white, and so they won the prize.

And so on and on, far beyond the limits of confinement to one subject that a cocktail party ordinarily sticks to. There were two men who were on the front page almost every day, and who were very exclusive—Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler. There were few in Hollywood who could say they had met either, and probably not one who could say that he had met Hitler within the past half year. Lanny could say it, and prove it by going into details about the scene in the Hotel Crillon, where Hitler had made his headquarters, and the railway carriage in the Compiègne forest where the armistice had been signed and Adi had done his little jig dance of triumph. To listen to all this was not merely idle curiosity on the part of Genie's guests, for one of the stock products of Hollywood had become anti-Nazi pictures, and Lanny's intimate stories would be useful to writers, producers, directors, costumers, property men, and on down the line.

IX

Presently he was telling about Karinhall, which was named after Göring's first wife and was the home of his second. Emmy Sonnemann, having been one of Germany's stage queens, was somebody this audience could understand. Now she had a baby—and that too was becoming a Hollywood custom and a matter of public excitement. Lanny told what happened when you went on a shooting trip with this old-style Teutonic robber baron at his lodge in the Silesian forest called Rominten: how you stood on a high stand while the stags were driven out in front of you, and you picked the one with the best horns and shot him, and then after eating an enormous supper of all kinds of game you put on your overcoat and went out into the moonlit forest where the stags had been laid in the snow, and listened while the trumpeters blew a sort of requiem for the stags, called a *Hallali*. Surely Hollywood ought to use that some day! And also the pig-sticking in the forests of the Obersalzberg—but those shots might be a bit difficult to get.

Lanny came to the subject of the Reichmarschall's taste in art, which ran to gentlemen in magnificent costumes and ladies in no costumes at all. For years Lanny had helped to get rid of paintings he didn't want and to acquire others more to his taste; in passing, the expert remarked: "Just before the war came, Hermann was arranging to purchase a set of sixteenth-century Flemish tapestries from Mr. Hearst's agents in London. He showed me the sketches of them, and told me a story about Sir Nevile Henderson, who had inspected the drawings. They were all of nude ladies representing various virtues, and the British Ambassador commented that he didn't see any representing Patience. Göring has a keen sense of humour, and when you hit it he throws his head back and bellows."

At this point the queen of publicity interposed: "Mr. Budd, have you ever met Mr. Hearst?"

"I have never had that pleasure," was the reply. "I missed him on his trip to Paris a couple of years ago."

"He was greatly impressed by both Göring and Hitler."

"So I have been told, and the feeling was reciprocated. Hermann and Adi are both remarkable men, and Mr. Hearst is one who would be able to appreciate them."

"I think he would be interested to hear your account of them."

"I should be honoured to meet him, Miss Parsons—and especially if I had your recommendation."

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hostess was bubbling with satisfaction, for her party had been a success, and she was sure it would get a fat paragraph in the morning. The game of publicity hunting is like the pinball device which you see in drugstores and poolrooms; you invest a lot of money, but it is only rarely that you hit the jackpot.

X

At ten o'clock next morning, after Lanny had finished his bath and his breakfast and his *Los Angeles Examiner*, the telephone rang in his hotel room. "Is this Mr. Lanny Budd? This is Louella Parsons."

"Oh, good morning, Miss Parsons. I have just read what you wrote about me in your column. It is very kind of you indeed."

"I write what I think. If you had been a chatterbox I would have said so—or I wouldn't have said anything."

"Thank you, Miss Parsons."

"I have just talked with Mr. Hearst. He would be pleased if you would visit him. He invites you for lunch to-day and to spend the week-end at San Simeon."

"But—how can I get there by lunchtime?"

"You will fly. His plane leaves the Burbank airport at eleven-thirty. There will be other passengers, so don't be late."

"I'll do my best, you may be sure."

"You won't need formal clothes; the place is called 'The Ranch.' Bear in mind that all guests are expected in the Great Hall every evening, and all are expected to witness the motion picture show with the Chief. No drinking is permitted in the private rooms."

"I do not drink, Miss Parsons, except when my host expects it."

"Mr. Hearst does not drink, either. There is one more rule that is imperative—no one ever mentions the subject of death in his presence."

"I will bear these admonitions in mind."

"If you do, you will have an enjoyable experience, and if the Chief likes you, you may stay as long as you wish."

"I am most grateful for your kindness, Miss Parsons."

"You may prove your gratitude by giving me any items that are suitable for my column. All my friends do that."

"I shall be truly glad to be enlisted among your friends."

So that was that; Lanny had accomplished his purpose in some thirty-six hours after his car had crossed the borders of the Golden State. He dressed hurriedly, packed his bags, paid his hotel bill, and obtained a map of the Los Angeles district, showing the route to the airport. Lanny was used to getting to places and it caused him no trouble.

He stored his car in a garage near the airport, and as he returned to the building he observed the arrival of a limousine, one of those elaborate custom-built jobs which mark the approach of a potentate, whether political, industrial, or theatrical. With the assistance of a uniformed footman there alighted a small lady with a large amount of blonde hair elaborately curled. She wore much paint and powder, the costliest possible furs, and quite a display of jewels: in short, a *tout ensemble* of worldly grandeur. It occurred to Lanny that the lady's face was familiar, but he forbore to stare and went on to the big shiny silver-topped plane.

The lady followed, with the footman carrying her bags, and Lanny perceived that he was to have the honour of travelling with this vision of loveliness. He realized who it must be: the actress whom the lord of San Simeon had installed in his palace something more than two decades ago, and of whom he was accustomed to say that he had spent six million dollars to make her a star. He had set up a producing concern and featured her in several pictures per year, and with the appearance of each picture certain newspapers scattered from Boston to Seattle and from Atlanta to Los Angeles would burst into paeans of praise. In the old days when Lanny had hobnobbed with newspapermen at international conferences, this procedure had been a theme for cynical jesting, and to a young Pink it had seemed a measure of his country's social decay.

Lanny gave his name to the pilot of the plane, who had it on a list. When introduced to the lady Lanny said: "I am indeed honoured, I am one of your ardent fans." This was a measure of Lanny's social decay, for his true opinion was that she couldn't act and that her efforts were pathetic.

XI

The roar of the plane made conversation difficult, so Lanny surveyed the landscape of California from the point of view of an eagle. First, masses of tumbled mountains, some bare and rocky, others with vegetation dried brown at this season of the year; then valleys with farms and orchards, and grey threads that were roads; always, off to the left, the blue Pacific, with a line of white surf, and now and then a vessel large or small. Very few towns, and rivers mostly dry beds; a land of which vast tracts were kept for grazing by wealthy owners who didn't want settlers and money so much as they wanted space and fresh air. Only a land-values tax could have reached them, and there could be no such tax because they owned the newspapers and controlled both political machines.

The trip took about an hour, which meant a couple of hundred

miles. A great stretch of lonely land, and then, close to the sea, *La Cuesta Encantada*—the enchanted hill—and on it a group of elaborate buildings which might have been the summer palace of the prince of the Asturias. The plane came down to a private airport, and there was a car to take them to the houses, and a station wagon for their bags. "Are you familiar with California, Mr. Budd?" inquired the lady.

Lanny replied: "It is my first visit, and I am agape with wonder." It was the proper attitude. "I have lived most of my life abroad," he continued. He had this *grande dame* of the silver screen to himself for a few minutes, and knew that the success of his enterprise might depend upon the impression he made. "So I have got most of my knowledge of America from your pictures and others. Now, when I see these landscapes I think I am on location, and when I meet you face to face I think I am back in Little Old New York—or I am with you in one or other of your films." Here he enumerated one or two.

"Dear me, you really must be one of my fans!" exclaimed the actress, who wasn't acting much nowadays, because in her forties she could no longer play juvenile parts and nobody dared to suggest any other parts.

"It must be a wonderful thing to know that you have given so much pleasure to so many millions of people. Unless my memory fails me I saw you in a tiny village called Stubendorf in Upper Silesia, and again in a wretched old shed called a theatre in Southern Spain. I have never forgotten how the audience wept on seeing those films." The treacherous one gave titles of two more films and made these speeches with tender feeling, and knew from the way they were received that he had made a friend at court. He had known what he was coming to California for, and he had not failed to stop in a library and look up in *Who's Who* the name of the actress, with the list of her "starring vehicles."

7

A Barren Sceptre

I

THE son of Budd-Erling had travelled three thousand miles, and here was his destination, the fabulous San Simeon, called "The Ranch." It was the ranch to end all ranchos, covering four hundred and twenty square miles, which meant that from the mansion you could ride some

fifteen miles in any direction, except out to sea, and never leave the estate. You could ride a horse, as "Willie" had done all through his boyhood; or if your taste ran to the eccentric, you could ride a zebra, or a llama, or a giraffe, a bison or yak or elephant or kangaroo or emu or cassowary. There were herds of all these creatures on the place, and numbers of central California cowboys to take care of them, and if a guest expressed a desire to ride one, the cowboys would no doubt take it as a perfectly normal eccentricity of these Hollywood folk. There were also lions and tigers and pumas and leopards in cages, and if Lanny had announced that he was a tamer of wild beasts and wanted to practise on these, the host would no doubt have seen to arranging it.

But the P.A. was a tamer of a more dangerous kind of wild beast; those who killed not for food but for glory; who killed not merely men but nations and civilizations. He was driven to La Casa del Sol—all the elaborate guest houses had Spanish names, as did everything else on the ranch. He was escorted to an elegant suite with a bathroom whose walls and floor and sunken tub were all of marble. He took a glance into one of the ample closets, and discovered therein complete outfits of every sort—one side of the closet for men and the other for women—pyjamas, dressing-gowns, swimming costumes, tennis and golf and riding clothes, and evening clothes which were permissible though not required. Lanny didn't stop to find out how they would fit him; the sun was shining and it was warm, so he put on his own palm beach suit and, following orders, made his way to La Casa Grande, which is Spanish for what on Southern plantations is "the big house." It was an immense structure in the style of an old Spanish mission; underneath it, the visitor learned before long, were acres of storerooms packed with art treasures like those he had inspected in the Bronx.

Here came the master of these treasures, the creator of this *Arabian Nights'* dream of magnificence. He had been tall and large in proportion, like most men of these wide-open spaces, but now his shoulders were bowed and there were signs of a paunch. He had a long face and an especially long nose, his enemies called it a horse face and had made it familiar in cartoons. His strangest feature was a pair of small eyes, watery blue, so pale that they seemed lifeless: no feeling in them at all, and very little in the face, or in the flabby, unresponsive hand. A man withdrawn, a man who never gave himself; now a man grown old, with pouches under his eyes, sagging cheeks, and wattles under his chin. Lanny thought: a man unhappy, not pleased with the people around him, not pleased with his memories, and with no hopes for this world or the next.

It was easy to imagine things about him. Was his reason for keeping so many people around him the fact that he could avoid observing the

defects of anyone? There were seldom fewer than fifty guests, Lanny had been told, and this week-end he estimated there were seventy-five; he had to meet them all—there was an efficient major-domo who took him the rounds. There were faces familiar from the screen, and others whose names told him that they were top executives, producers and directors of pictures. He guessed that they had drifted from the world of make-believe, after he had failed so desolately to make a success in the world of politics and public affairs. He had tried to help the people—or so he must have told himself—but they had refused to trust him. Here was a new world, easier to live in, one made to order, and in which wealth could have its way.

The important, the big-money people of "the industry"—so it called itself—came here and made the place a sort of country club without dues. There was everything you could think of in the way of convenience; a Midas expended fifteen million dollars a year to maintain it, and granted the use of it to his courtiers and favourites. There was a bar, never closed, and you could have anything you asked for, provided you drank it in the public rooms. There was an immense medieval hall where you could play pool or billiards or ping-pong, in between thousand-year-old choir stalls—incongruous, but no more so than other features of this fantastic estate. You could hunt or fish, or play tennis in courts with gold-quartz walls; you could swim in a pool of fresh cold water, or in another of salt water pumped up from the ocean and warmed.

II

After the cocktail hour, the lord of the manor took the arm of a star of the first magnitude and led a sort of grand-opera march into the dining-hall, which was in the style of a medium-sized cathedral. Everything was supposed to be different from what it was, and this apparently was a monks' refectory; there was no cloth on the long table, which was of bare heavy wood, many centuries old. Priceless old china and glassware suggested a museum, printed menus suggested a hotel dining-room, while paper napkins suggested the lunch counter of a "five and ten." The centre of the table was marked by a long line of condiments and preserves, all in their original containers; all home-made, and the host was very proud of them. Like nothing else the much-travelled Lanny had seen on this earth during the repast was the entourage of a film star. Behind her chair stood a liveried man-servant holding an embroidered silk tray with her toilet articles, and at a sign he would step forward and she would make use

of them. The chair beside her was occupied by an elderly dog whose name was Gandhi—even though he was not a vegetarian; as each course of the elaborate meal was served, a special attendant brought Gandhi a silver tray with slices of choice meats, which were eaten with due propriety.

After the meal came the motion-picture showing, in a projection room built for that purpose. Attendance was obligatory upon all guests, and Lanny wondered about this; he had had no such experience since he had been a pupil at St. Thomas's Academy in Connecticut and had been obliged to attend chapel every morning. Was it the host's purpose to dignify the motion-picture art by setting it on the level of a form of worship? Was it a means of doing honour to the gracious lady who deigned to occupy the "Celestial Suite" in his palace? (Mrs. William Randolph Hearst lived in a mansion in New York.) Could it possibly have happened that in times past some guest had had the atrocious taste to wish to read his evening paper while a picture was being run? The lord of this manor was a person of whims and furious temper; if an employee displeased him he would kick him out without ceremony and never see him again. Lanny had never forgotten a story told to him by one of the Hearst correspondents abroad: the man had been called to a conference in the master's New York home, and they had talked until long after midnight; the host, being hungry, had taken his guest to the icebox; finding it locked, he had not let himself be balked, but had taken a red-painted fire axe from the wall and chopped his way through the door.

The "feature" for this Saturday night was one of those comedies which had come to be known as "screwball." It had not yet been released, for of course this master of infinite publicity had the right to priority, and would never risk showing his guests anything shopworn. The picture had been made for a public which found life dull and depressing, and which paid its money for one purpose, to get as far away from reality as possible. The heroine of the story was the daughter of a millionaire who lived in a house with the customary drawing-room resembling a railway station, and the hero was a handsome male doll supposed to be a newspaper reporter, that being an occupation which made it plausible for him to encounter a millionaire's daughter. The young lady, wearing a different expensive costume in every scene, tried to run away from a traffic cop and landed in gaol under an alias; the reporter tried to get her out, and there resulted a series of absurd adventures, most of which all motion-picture people had seen and helped to produce in many previous films.

In short, it was a stereotype, as much so as the faces and gestures of the leading man and lady. The reporter was supposed to be poor, but

when you visited his mother's home you discovered that it had a kitchen half as big as a railway station, and that the mother and sisters wore the smartest clothes and had their hair waved and not a single strand out of place—otherwise the scene would have been reshot. Lanny watched the episodes, some of which depended upon what Broadway called wisecracks, and others upon slapstick, people falling on their behinds or into a fishpond; the scenes whirled by at breathless pace, as if the producers were driven by fear that if they paused for a moment the public might have time to realize what vapidness was being fed to them.

Lanny couldn't make his escape; he had to stick it out. But there were no chains on his mind; he thought about these men and women, all persons of importance, of some kind of responsibility. What were *their* thoughts while they watched this entertainment? In their own word, it was "tripe," and to the last person they must have been aware of the fact. Somebody here had produced it for the purpose of making money; and the others would be thinking: How much will it gross? They would speculate: Is there anything I can learn from it, any ideas I can take over, any actors, any writers I might hire?

Lanny knew the formula by which they excused themselves: it was "what the public wants." The public, in the view of movie magnates, had no heart, no conscience, no brains; the public didn't want to learn anything, it didn't want to think, it didn't want to improve itself, or to see its children better than itself. It just wanted to be amused, on its lowest level; it wanted to see life made ridiculous by grotesque mishaps; it wanted to revel in wealth, regardless of how it was gained or how wasted; above all it wanted to watch adolescence pairing off, kissing and getting ready to get married—boy meets girl! The assumption was that they would live happy ever after, though never was it shown how that miracle would be achieved, and though the divorce rate in America was continually increasing.

This code expressed boundless cynicism concerning human nature, an unfaith become a faith. It was contempt fanned by the fires of greed; it was reason to the soul of man erected into a business system, organized, systematized, and spread into every corner of the earth. This particular "hunk of cheese"—one of the phrases Lanny had learned on the previous evening—was being offered to a world tottering upon the edge of an abyss. While it was being previewed, London Bridge might be falling down, and the British Empire crashing to its doom; before the picture had finished its run, America itself might be fighting for its life; but the mob would still guffaw at a "dame" being slapped on her "butt."

Lanny thought it was no accident that Hearst had sought refuge in this screen world; his personality and his life had been an incarnation

of the same treason to the soul of man. For more than half a century his papers had been feeding scandal and murder to the American public; he had been setting psychological traps for their pennies and nickels, and because these traps succeeded, his contempt for the victims had been confirmed. By such means he had accumulated the second greatest fortune in America, and when he had got it he didn't know what to do with it, except to build this caricature of a home, this costliest junk yard on the earth. Here it was, and he had invited a swarm of courtiers and sycophants, and entertained them by presenting them with a caricature of themselves, a world as empty and false as San Simeon itself. The most incredible fact of all—so thought the presidential agent—he *made* them look at it! He rubbed their noses in their own vomit! Did he hate them that much?

III

The host had been told about his new guest, and after the showing invited him to view some of the special treasures in this home. Thus Lanny learned a new aspect of this strange individual; he really loved beautiful things. Not the men who produced them—during his stay in San Simeon Lanny didn't meet a single artist, and he saw very few *objets d'art* produced by living persons. What Hearst loved were the objects, as things to admire, to show, and above all, to possess. He unlocked a special cabinet and took out a rare vase of Venetian glass; it was something marvellous, a rich green fading into the colour of milk, cloudy, translucent, and when you held it up to the light the colours wavered and pulsed as if the object were alive. "When you have something like that," remarked the Duke of San Simeon, "you have a pleasure that endures; you come to think of it as a friend."

"Ah, yes," replied the expert, who had learned something about the human heart as well as the price of paintings. "And it does not turn out to be something other than you had thought. It does not become corrupted; it does not betray you or slander you; it does not try to get anything out of you."

Was there a flash of light in those pale blank eyes, or was it just a reflection from the shiny surface of the vase? "I see you understand the meaning of art, Mr. Budd," remarked the host.

They wandered through the halls of this private museum, and Lanny hadn't needed any advance preparation. He knew these painters and their works, and could tell interesting stories about both; he could make technical comments that were right; and most important of all, he knew values. He was used to talking to men who lived by and for money, and here was one of the world's greatest money masters,

a man who had bought not merely all kinds of things but men and women for a vast array of purposes. When he had come to New York, half a century ago, to shoulder his way into metropolitan journalism, he had bought most of Pulitzer's crack staff; he had even hired a room in the World Building so as to do it with speed and convenience. He had bought editors, writers, advertising and circulation men, all by the simple process of finding out what they were getting and offering them twice as much. And he had the same attitude toward paintings; when he wanted one he got it, regardless of price—but he remembered the price!

So now Lanny remarked: "I found a Goya rather like that four years ago, while I was running away from the war in Spain, and I sold it in Pittsburgh for twenty-five thousand dollars." The host replied: "I got that one for seventeen thousand, but it was a long time ago." And then Lanny: "It is a fine specimen; it might bring thirty or forty thousand now. The well-to-do have discovered that old masters are a form of sound investment, and offer the advantage that you don't have to pay duty."

Presently they were in front of a Canaletto, a glimpse of Venice, bright and clear like the tones of a small bell. Lanny remarked: "I sold one for Hermann Göring not long ago."

It was a bait, and was grabbed instantly. "Louella tells me you know Göring well, and also Hitler."

"I have had that good fortune. I have known the Führer for some thirteen years, and Hermann for half that."

"They are extraordinary men," said the host. "I should like to talk with you about them sometime while you are here."

"With pleasure, Mr. Hearst." It was a date.

IV

In the middle of Sunday morning, while the guests sallied forth to amuse themselves on the estate, or sat on the veranda in the sunshine reading copies of the *Examiner* which had been flown in by plane, the publisher invited his new friend into the study where no one came save by invitation. There Lanny spread before him a treasure of knowledge concerning Nazi-Fascism which he had been accumulating over a period of two decades. He told how he had first seen Mussolini, then a journalist, in a *trattoria* in San Remo, in a furious argument with his former Red associates; how later, in Cannes, he had interviewed him during an international conference. He told about Schloss Stubendorf, where he had visited Kurt Meissner as a boy, and about Heinrich Jung who had become one of the earliest of the Nazis, and

had taken Lanny to Adi's apartment in Berlin in the days before the Führer had had that or any other title.

"I thought I was something of a Pink in those days," Lanny said, "and Hitler had a programme very much like the one you had when you were young, Mr. Hearst. He was going to put an end to interest slavery, as he called it, and 'bust the trusts'; it sounded like one of Brisbane's editorials with all the important phrases in caps."

"That was a long time ago," remarked the publisher, with perhaps a trace of nostalgia. "We have all learned that the trusts can be made useful with proper regulation."

"Of course; but the programme pleased the people, in Berlin and Munich as it had in New York and Chicago. It is a fact which I have pointed out to my friends in England and France, that the Nazis did not come into power as a movement to put down the Reds and to preserve large-scale business enterprise; they came as a radical movement, offering the people what they thought was a constructive programme. It very much resembled the old Populist programme in this country."

"You are correct," said Mr. Hearst. "But the trouble is, Roosevelt has stolen all our thunder, and what can we do?"

"Congressman Fish asked the same question when I mentioned the subject to him. I cannot answer, because my specialty is painting, not statesmanship. All I can do is to point out the facts I have observed. In countries where the people have the ballot you have to promise them something desirable, otherwise the opposition will outbid you."

"They are raising the price higher and higher, Mr. Budd. I have long been saying that if the bidding continues, it will result in the destruction of our democratic system."

"You may be right. There are many in England who observe labour's demands continually increasing, and who look with envy upon what Hitler has been able to achieve."

"But even he has to go on making promises, Mr. Budd."

"Of course; but he is able to put off the fulfilment until after victory is won. Then, in all probability, he will find it possible to keep the promises. The Germans will be a ruling race, and all others on the Continent will work for them; so it should be possible to give German workers a larger share of the product."

"You think he is certain to win?"

"How is it possible to think otherwise? He no longer has any opponent but Britain; and can Britain conquer the Continent of Europe? Sooner or later their resources will give out, and they will have to accept the compromise which Hitler holds out to them. I can tell you about this, because I myself have been the bearer of

a man who had bought not merely all kinds of things but men and women for a vast array of purposes. When he had come to New York, half a century ago, to shoulder his way into metropolitan journalism, he had bought most of Pulitzer's crack staff; he had even hired a room in the World Building so as to do it with speed and convenience. He had bought editors, writers, advertising and circulation men, all by the simple process of finding out what they were getting and offering them twice as much. And he had the same attitude toward paintings; when he wanted one he got it, regardless of price—but he remembered the price!

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messages from the Führer to Lord Wickthorpe, who has just resigned his post at the Foreign Office in protest against Churchill's stubbornness."

V

Naturally, the publisher of eighteen newspapers wanted to know all about this mission. He wanted to know what the proposals were and what chance there would be of modifying them. He wanted to know what terms had been offered to the French, and what secret clauses might be in the armistice agreement with France. He wanted to hear about the struggle going on between Laval and Pétain within the Vichy Government, and how that was likely to turn out. Was Hitler going to get the French Fleet, and was he strong enough to take Gibraltar? What was the actual strength of the Italian army, and would it be able to break into Egypt and close the Suez Canal? An extraordinarily complicated war, and fascinating if you could take an aloof position, and not be worried about the possibility of your own country being drawn into it!

A year or so after the Nazis had taken power, William Randolph Hearst had paid a visit to both Rome and Berlin. He had made a deal with the Nazis whereby his International News Service was to have the exclusive use of all Nazi official news—a very good thing financially. The publisher had had several confidential talks with the Führer, and told Lanny how greatly he had been impressed by this man's grasp of international affairs. "Naturally, I am sympathetic to his domestic programme," he explained. "There can be no question that he has made Germany over, and that he has been a blessing to the country. But I could not continue to endorse him, because of what he has done to the Jews. You understand that—if only for business reasons."

"Certainly," replied Lanny with a smile. "New York appears to have become a Jewish city."

Six years had passed since Mr. Hearst's visit; and what had these years done to the Führer, and to his *Nummer Zwei* and his *Nummer Drei*? The host plied his guest with questions, and the guest answered frankly, telling many stories about the Führer's home life, both at Berchtesgaden and Berlin; about Göring's hunting lodge in the Schorfheide, which had been the property of the Prussian State, but Göring had calmly taken it over and built it into a palace, much on the order of San Simeon, though Lanny forbore to mention that. He talked about Hess's interest in astrologers and spirit mediums, that being no secret in regard to the head of the Nazi Party. He told of confidential talks with these men, and explained how it was possible for them to accept an American art expert as a friend and even an

adviser. There had to be somebody to take messages to other countries and bring replies, and official personalities were often unsatisfactory because they had become involved in factional strife and intrigues at home.

"Göring hates Ribbentrop like poison, and so does Hess," Lanny explained, "and all three of them hate Goebbels. The Führer uses them all, and plays one against another; he never trusts anyone completely, except possibly Hess, and when I come along he may be relieved to meet somebody who is untouched by this steam of jealousy and suspicion. He feels that he has known me from boyhood, because of my intimacy with Kurt Meissner and Heinrich Jung, two men who have been his loyal followers from the beginning and who have never once asked a favour of him. Then, too, both the Führer and Göring have more than once offered me money, and I have refused it, which impresses them greatly."

"They wanted you in their service?"

"Yes; but I explained to them that if I incurred such obligations I should part with my sense of freedom; I should begin to worry about whether or not I was earning my keep, and they would begin to think I was an idler, and would start making demands upon me."

A smile came upon the long face of this man of so many millions. "Are you telling me this so that I won't make you a proposal, Mr. Budd?"

"No, it hadn't occurred to me that you might wish to."

"You are a modest man, indeed. What you have been telling me is of importance to one who is getting on in years and inclined to stay in his own chimney corner. First-hand information is not easy to come by, and I would be very pleased to pay for it, and would promise never to put the least pressure upon you. If you would come to see me now and then and let me pump your mind as I have just been doing, it would be worth, say, fifty thousand dollars a year to me—or more, if that would help."

"I have always heard that you were munificent, Mr. Hearst, and now you are proving it. I would be glad to be numbered among your friends, and now and then to run out and see you; but I would rather do it as I do for other friends, because of the pleasure I get from being helpful. My profession of art expert provides for my needs, and I am one of those fortunate persons whose work is play."

"You are able to earn so much?"

"I don't need so much, because I am a guest wherever I go—at my father's home in Connecticut, at my mother's home on the Riviera, at my former wife's home in England. It sounds odd, so I must explain that Lord Wickthorpe married Irma Barnes, and we have managed to remain friends. I have a little daughter who lives at

Wickthorpe Castle, and I go there to stay with her. It is a box seat from which to view the affairs of the British Empire."

The man of money was troubled by this attitude toward his own divinity, which was money. Quite possibly nothing of the sort had ever happened to him before. "You do not consider the necessity of providing for your old age?"

"There, too, I have been favoured by fortune. My father has considerable money, and if I should reach old age, I have reason to expect to inherit a share of it."

That put the matter on a different basis; it established this suave gentleman among the small group of social equals. "I suppose I have to accept your decision, Mr. Budd; but bear me in mind on your travels, and any time you have information or advice which you think I ought to have, send it to me by cable, and if you will let me have the name of your bank in this country, I will see that the cost is deposited to your account."

"As you know, Mr. Hearst, the British government makes cabling a dubious matter in wartime. But when I am in this country I can telegraph you—and it does sometimes happen that I have a suggestion that might be of interest."

"Dictate it to a stenographer and send it collect," commanded the Duce of San Simeon. "Don't worry about the length—you have carte blanche from this time forth."

VI

Louella Parsons had told Lanny that he might be invited to stay as long as he pleased, and so it turned out. He accepted, because he was curious about this man of vast power whom he regarded as one of the fountainheads of American Fascism; also about the guests who came and went so freely at this free country club. They were the rulers of California; the officials, the judges, the newspaper managers and editors, the big business-men; but above all the motion-picture colony in its higher departments, the masters of super-publicity.

The oddest business in the world, it seemed to the son of Budd-Erling; the providing of dreams to all the peoples of the earth. "The industry" was about as old as Lanny himself, and the men in it had grown up with it, and didn't find it so strange. Its big business-men were very little different from those who provided clothing in New York and other cities; there, too, the fashions had to be studied; elegance was another kind of dream, and the public's whims could make or break you. The men who manufactured and marketed entertainment bought the services of other men and women, just as a

newspaper publisher did, and they estimated the value of these persons by what could be made out of their talents.

If a man wrote a best-selling novel they would hire him to write for them at several thousand dollars a week, and would install him in a cubicle with a typewriter and a secretary; if they had nothing for him to do at the moment they would expect him to wait, and they might forget him for six months, but they saw no reason why he should object, so long as he was receiving his salary check. His best-seller might have had to do with, say, the sufferings of the sharecroppers of Louisiana, and they would put him to work on a script having to do with a murder mystery in Hawaii. You might hear half a dozen anecdotes similar to this in a morning's chat at San Simeon, but you weren't supposed to laugh—a polite little smile would answer all purposes.

Just now the presidential campaign was at its climax, and much of the conversation of the guests had to do with this subject. "That Man in the White House" was trying to grab off a third term, and most of the top men in "the industry," like the top men in all the other industries, considered that the salvation of the country depended upon the rebuking of this insolent ambition. Every morning the *Examiner* came, and every afternoon the *Herald-Express*, Hearst papers filled with editorials and columns and doctored news, all in a frenzied effort to discredit the Administration. The guests read these papers, and talked in the same vein. Lanny heard nobody dissenting; the nearest any came to it were two or three who suggested mildly that the affairs of the country would go on much the same whether it was Willkie or Roosevelt. These men were looked upon as in very bad taste, and Lanny kept carefully away from them.

VII

Every day at San Simeon there arrived by airmail copies of eighteen Hearst newspapers from all over America. Presumably one man couldn't read them all, but he could glance over them with a pair of eyes practised for more than half a century; then he would dictate a telegram to the managing editor of each paper, saying what was wrong, and the telegrams were famous for their vigorous language. This had been the practice ever since 1887, when Willie Hearst had taken over his daddy's newspaper, the *San Francisco Examiner*—soon after being expelled from Harvard University for the offence of sending to each of his professors an elegant *pot de chambre* with the professor's name inscribed in gold letters on the inside.

Now and then this grown-up playboy would retire from the com-

pany of his guests and seat himself in a corner of the Great Hall, and resting a pad of paper on the arm of his chair would start writing with a lead pencil. Nobody disturbed him at such times, for they knew that he was writing a directive which would change the policy of his papers, or perhaps an editorial which would change the policy of the United States government. Sometimes these editorials would be signed with their author's name, and in that case they would appear double-column in large type; or they might be published as run-of-the-mine editorials, always in all the papers on the same day.

It was quite a pulpit, and if you knew the text you could pretty well write the sermon yourself. Willie Hearst had hated the British Empire ever since he had shot off his first firecracker on the Fourth of July. He had hated France ever since the year 1930, when he had been ordered out of that country after having brought all the guests of San Simeon for a tour of Europe on a whim. He hated the Reds and the Pinks, every variety of them, ever since they had undertaken to carry out the programme which Willie had been advocating when he hoped to become the people's candidate. He hated F.D.R. for having succeeded where Willie had failed—and especially for having promoted an income tax which had made it necessary for Willie to part with his art treasures and with the financial management of his chain of publications.

Lanny watched closely, day by day, and was quite sure that he recognized where some of his host's editorials had come from. For a secret agent not merely had to listen, he had to voice ideas, and be sure that the ideas were those his listener wanted to hear. Afterwards he winced when he discovered these ideas being circulated to the extent of five million copies, sometimes in the very words he had used. This new Willie-Lanny team told the American people: "If the American people want war, they should surely re-elect Mr. Roosevelt. Whether they want it or not, they will surely get it by electing him."

And again: "Congress, in the gravest hour in the history of the Republic, has ceased to function constitutionally. It is not asked whether it wants war or peace. The people, the ultimate power in our democracy, are treated and shushed away from official doors in Washington—doors behind which we are being sold down the river to war and economic slavery."

And yet again: "By its pernicious system of political bounties and pillage of the public treasury, and by its vicious appeals to class-consciousness—which inevitably begets class hatred—the New Deal has actually laboured to make America mob-minded, and neither law nor democracy can survive in a mob-minded country."

VIII

Election day, November 5, 1940, arrived, and there were few guests at San Simeon, because they considered it their duty to scatter to their homes and record their votes against the great American Dictator. But after voting they came by plane load and by motor car to play tennis and ride horseback and swim until it was time to turn on the radio in the Great Hall and listen to the returns. California, being three hours behind the East, gets the early returns in the latter part of the afternoon; by five o'clock they were coming in a flood, and by dinner-time it was all over, and everybody knew that the Third Term had swept the country. Willkie was going to carry only ten states—and you could get what comfort there was in the fact that it was a gain of eight over what the Republican candidate of four years ago had managed to obtain.

Lanny could not recall when he had ever seen so large a collection of unhappy human beings; certainly not since he had been in the old grey smoke-stained building in Downing Street, the home of the British Foreign Office, on the night or rather the early morning when Hitler had begun his raid on Poland. Conversation in the San Simeon refectory was in low tones, and not much of it. Lanny wondered: Was this Hollywood play-acting, carried on for the benefit of the host, or had they actually come to believe their own propaganda? Anyhow, it was like a funeral repast, and to have laughed would have been a shocking breach of taste.

Later in the evening, in the host's very private study, the P.A. had the serious talk for which he had journeyed across a continent. "We have met with a grave disappointment, Mr. Hearst," began the guest, "and before I take my leave, I should like to know what you think about it, and what I should advise my friends abroad."

What Mr. Hearst thought was that the country was in one hell of a mess, but there was nothing that he or anybody else could do about it. The American people had made their bed and would have to lie in it; they had lighted a hot fire under themselves and would now stew in their own juice. The vexed old man predicted a series of calamities, to which getting into the war was but the vestibule. The public debt would pile up and there would be no way out but to declare national bankruptcy; the industry of the country would be converted to war purposes, and likewise its labour, and when the horror was over, whichever side won would be the loser. There would be such an unemployment problem as had never been dreamed of in the world; there would be strikes, riots, and insurrections. Worst of all, there would be the Red Dictator sitting in the Kremlin, chortling with glee; he would be piling up his military equipment, and at the end he would be the only

power left in Europe; he wouldn't even have to take possession by force of arms, his Communist agents would do it by propaganda, and bankrupt countries would tumble into his lap like so many ripe peaches.

Lanny waited until this Book of Lamentations had arrived at a chapter end, and then he said: "I agree with every word you have spoken, Mr. Hearst. My father has been saying the same things ever since Munich. I think the greater number of our responsible businessmen realize the dangers, and there are some I have talked with who aren't disposed to sit by and let fate have its way."

"But what can they do?"

"We Americans have hypnotized ourselves with the idea of the sovereignty of the ballot; and that is a great convenience to our opponents, who have the mob on their side. As you well know, it is the property owners who are going to have to pay when this débacle comes, because they are the only ones who have anything to pay with."

"No doubt about that, Budd." Lanny was being promoted by the dropping of the "Mister."

"Well, Hitler showed the industrialists of Germany that they didn't have to lie down and submit to having their pockets emptied; and it seems to some men I know that they have the same elemental right of self-defence."

"You mean they are proposing to turn Roosevelt out? That would mean a civil war. I couldn't face it!"

"It might mean a small-sized one, but surely it would be cheaper than the one we are being betrayed into. Just think of it, we are being invited to conquer the Continent of Europe! We are being put into the position where we shall be obliged to do it, for Germany will not submit forever to the treacherous underground war that Roosevelt is conducting. Also, Japan will not sit by in idleness, and we shall find that we have undertaken to conquer Asia too."

"All that is beyond dispute, Budd. But, good God, we haven't the means for overthrowing the Administration!"

"There are some who think we can get the means; and it is a matter of no little importance to them to know what your attitude will be."

The Duce of San Simeon did not exclaim: "Get out of my house, you scoundrel!" Instead he remarked, rather sadly: "I am an old man, and such adventures must be left to younger spirits."

"Old men for counsel, young men for war, the proverb says. The question is, What counsel you have to give? Surely this cannot be the first time you have heard the idea!"

"I have heard it talked about a lot, naturally. But if any group is contemplating action, I have not been informed of it."

"If to-night's news does not bring them to the point of action, then they might as well stop talking. Roosevelt is going to take this election

as a complete endorsement, and will go ahead with his plans more recklessly than ever."

"That we can be sure of, Budd."

"If there are men who mean to act, they will want support, financial as well as moral. Understand, please, I wouldn't touch any money myself; but I might put them in contact with you if you would permit it."

The Duce of San Simeon looked worried; as much so as he had looked in a photograph which Lanny had seen of him when his newspapers had charged four senators with having accepted bribes, and then, summoned before an investigating committee, he had watched the documents in the case proved to be forgeries. Said W.R.H.: "This is a matter in which one could not afford even to be named without careful consideration. I shall have to ask that you do not mention me to anyone without first telling me who the person is and giving me an opportunity to consent or refuse. Count me out of it!"

"That is a proper request, Mr. Hearst, and I assure you that you may rely absolutely upon my discretion."

"It is a matter that I cannot leave to anyone's discretion. You must agree positively not to mention me in connection with this matter. *It is far too serious.*"

"You have that word. But let me urge this upon you in the meantime: Do not weaken in your opposition to Roosevelt and his war policies."

"That you may count upon, on my word. The Hearst papers will stand like a rock in the midst of a raging torrent."

So they left the matter. It wasn't until next morning that Lanny discovered how this man of much forethought had prepared in advance and sent to his newspapers an editorial to be published in the event that his long-maintained verbal war upon the Presidential Dictatorship should turn out to be unsuccessful. Said the *Los Angeles Examiner*, on the morning after the election: "The Hearst newspapers have never questioned the right of the American people to give Mr. Roosevelt a third term, or any number of terms he may seek and they see fit to grant."

IX

When Lanny decided that he had learned enough about the ideas and purposes of William Randolph Hearst, he announced his departure and expressed his thanks, and then went to his suite in the Casa del Sol to pack his suitcases. He did this in an unusual way, putting some sheets of writing-paper on top of his clothing in one suitcase, and

contriving it so that one sheet was slightly displaced and was caught by the lid when it was closed—but not enough to show. With his other suitcases he did the same thing with the tail of one of the shirts, folded not quite regularly, and with one edge caught by the lid—but not showing. He did not lock the suitcases, but left them in the middle of the floor to be carried down by one of the servants.

The reason for this was a chat Lanny had had with a prominent motion-picture director who was among the guests. Lanny had remarked that everything in his suite was "period," even to the toilet articles; and the director, an Irishman with a sense of humour, had replied: "Don't try to carry any of it off. Your baggage will be searched before you leave." To Lanny's exclamation of incredulity, the other had offered a wager; and though Lanny hadn't accepted, he was making a test, just out of idle curiosity. He judged that anybody making a search would be in a hurry and would fail to note the significance of a bit of paper or a shirt tail caught under the lid of a suitcase.

And so it proved. When the guest was deposited at the Burbank airport he carried his bags to the car which he had stored, and there he carefully opened one after the other. Sure enough, the single piece of paper was inside with the other sheets; also the bit of shirt had been pushed back and was no longer caught by the lid. Both bags had been opened!

Lanny reflected on this episode, then and later, and realized that there was something to be said for a man who conducted a free country club for the Hollywood elite. It was a common practice of hotel guests to carry off spoons as souvenirs, and doubtless the lord of San Simeon had sustained many losses. Lanny decided that he was glad he didn't own so many things that the rest of the world wanted. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal!"

8

My Dancing Days are Done

I

BACK in Hollywood again, Lanny attended some more parties, and cultivated the acquaintances he had made. Those he had met at San Simeon represented the right-wing of the industry; there was a left-

wing, also, smaller but vociferous. The Rightists called themselves America Firsters, and their opponents called them Fascists; the Leftists called themselves Liberals, and their opponents called them Reds. Each side tried to slip something of its "ideology" into the productions with which it had to do, and then watched eagerly to see its judgment vindicated in the box-office returns, the Hollywood equivalent of ballots.

A presidential agent, of course, couldn't afford to be seen drinking cocktails with anybody from the Left. He cultivated Cecil de Mille, and Major Rupert Hughes, who had organized a cavalry troop of simon-pure patriots for the purpose of keeping the labour unions in their places. Lanny wanted to know how these cinema troopers were taking their recent licking at the polls, also who was putting up the money for the men who were dropping showers of leaflets from the rooftops of office buildings in Los Angeles, calling for a Nazi-style revolution in the sweet land of liberty.

This wasn't the job which had been assigned to P.A. 103, so after a while he took the precaution to get Baker on the long distance telephone. He was told that his Chief was leaving in one week for a vacation in the Caribbean. Lanny, troubled in conscience, replied: "I'll be there in six days, possibly five," and packed his bags and set out within an hour.

He took the southern route, partly to avoid the snow in the Rockies, and partly in order to see more of the land of his fathers. He drove back through the orange groves, but instead of turning north he continued eastward through the date country, and past the mountains called "Chocolate," looking very tasty from a distance but hot and deadly dry. He crossed the Colorado River by another long bridge, and it was Arizona, land of the Apaches, long since tamed and mostly departed. Here were more masses of tumbled mountains, and rocks of every colour, from the size of a pebble to the size of a city, painted every hue and sculptured to every shape. The road wound through passes and climbed high ranges, and came down into broad irrigated valleys and through towns which had been desert only a generation ago.

Lanny had undertaken to drive three thousand miles in five or six days, so he would have to stick at it all the time except for eating or sleeping. He would have a sharp pain in the back of his neck, due to the strain of balancing his head against the motion of the car; but he would get over it, as he had done many times before. Landscapes gliding by seldom failed to entertain him, and when he tired, there was the verbal panorama of present-day history. At no place was he out of range of some radio station which would give him reports from the great air blitz. London was still holding out, and the R.A.F.

miraculously continuing to give more than it took. The Germans had not sailed against England.

Toward midnight, emerging from a mountain pass upon a high plateau, he saw the gleam of many lights, as if it were a miniature of the Great White Way. It was an auto camp, a development of the motor age in this far western country; "motels," some of them were called, for the people here were as bold with the language as with the landscape. A row of brightly painted cabins were set back from the highway, so spaced that between each cabin and the next was a covered shelter for a car. Inside the cabin was a bedroom with twin beds, and sometimes a couch for a child; also a bathroom and a tiny kitchenette. Everything would be spick and span, and you would pay your two or three dollars and have the use of this retreat until noon of the next day.

In the morning you would find a filling station, a grocery store, and a lunch counter where you might have your orange juice or coffee and your toast and eggs. Lanny had never seen anything like this in benighted Europe, nor even in the self-satisfied eastern states; he decided that when the horror of Nazi-Fascism had been banished from the world he would like nothing better than to spend a year driving over the national highways of the West and visiting its national parks. He drove from this "motel," pondering the question: Who would be riding by his side, Lizbeth Holdenhurst or Laurel Creston? Youth or maturity, beauty or brains, philoprogenitiveness or philosophization?

II

Presently it was southern New Mexico, the same kind of country, and then Lanny's car rolled down from high grey-coloured mountains into bright and shining El Paso—"the Pass." Everything had to be bright in that dry land where there were no fogs and no dust except during storms. Presently the car was speeding down the wide valley of the Rio Grande, famed in story and song. The mountains were grey and brown, and so were the adobe houses of the Mexicans; the grey concrete highway was painted with a brown stripe in the centre—a harmony of colours which would have delighted Whistler, and if he had painted it he would have called it a "symphony" or an "arrangement" or something fancy like that.

Some unkind person has compared Texas to hell; but in truth Texas is a continent, and can be compared to most any place. The hills faded away, and there were barren dry plains which a stranger might have mistaken for farming country, the mesquite trees looked

so much like orchards. The road went straight, mile after mile—you could drive all day at sixty miles an hour, and still it would be Texas. The day was warm and the night cold, but Lanny had an overcoat and a rug. Tire trouble delayed him only half an hour to put on his spare wheel, and he had the "flat" fixed while he ate lunch. The morning and evening of the third day he rolled into the city of Dallas, where there was another auto camp in a lovely grove of trees.

Next day it was Arkansas, and then a ferry across the "Father of Waters," and he was in Memphis, where the "blues" come from, and the country which all the world knows about from *Huckleberry Finn*. Then the lovely river valleys and farms of Tennessee. It was like coming into another world, where rocks and sand have never been heard of, where rivers run all the year round, and hills and mountains are covered with hardwood trees on their lower slopes and pines higher up. Lanny's route led through the Great Smokies, the country of the moonshiners and the hillbilly songs. There was a snowstorm in the high pass, and he had to drive carefully. But he spent that night in North Carolina, and in the morning phoned to Baker and asked for an appointment in the evening. Three hours later he phoned from Lynchburg and had the appointment confirmed.

After that he didn't have to hurry, but could watch the Virginia "wilderness," and learn from the tablets by the roadside that he was passing through the battlefields of history's greatest civil war. When he rolled into Washington at dinner-time he could say that he had really seen his country. He had travelled from its film capital to its political capital in five and a half days, and when he got out of the car he was a bit stiff and shaky in the knees. But a hot bath and a good dinner fixed him up, and then he stretched out on a bed and caught up on his newspaper reading. London was still holding out, though more than fifteen thousand civilians had been killed or wounded by bombs during the previous month. Ships were being sunk, several every day, and docks bombed and burned. How long Britain could stand it was a problem in mathematics with too many unknown factors. Lord Lothian, British Ambassador, arrived in Washington, reporting that his country was in a bad way and would be glad of any help we could give.

Lanny had known this suave gentleman since the days of the Peace Conference in Paris, when he had been plain Philip Kerr, pronounced Carr, secretary to Lloyd-George. A couple of years ago he had visited Germany; an ardent Christian Scientist, he had believed the best even of Hermann Wilhelm Göring—the best being a pledge of reconciliation with the British Empire on the basis of Germany being permitted to have her way in Central Europe. Lanny had listened to

his lordship expounding this familiar cliché in Wickthorpe Castle, and had thought of the Swedish diplomat who had advised his son to learn with how little wisdom the world is governed.

III

At a quarter to ten Lanny was picked up at the appointed street corner and taken to the White House in the usual way. He went up the narrow side stairway and into the familiar high-ceilinged room, with large sofas, overstuffed chairs, and a fireplace in front; dark blue paper on the walls, and framed paintings of the old China Clippers which the Chief loved. But it would be better not to mention them, for you might get him started telling stories about his grandfather, who captained one. "I am afraid he was an opium smuggler," the Chief would say, with a twinkle in his blue eyes. He would talk for so long that you might not get to transact the business for which you had come.

There was the familiar figure in the old-fashioned mahogany bed; there were the blue-and-white striped pyjamas, the blue crew-necked sweater, and the pile of letters and reports. There, also, the familiar smile and the warm resonant voice. "I didn't think you'd make it, Lanny!" he exclaimed. Lanny said: "I like nothing better than motoring, and I have made the most of my chance over here. In France nowadays you don't see a car on the roads unless it is driven by a German. All French men and women have taken to bicycles."

That, too, was an unfortunate remark; for the Chief said: "In my youth I bicycled all over those roads," and he started telling about the routes, the scenery, and various adventures. Lanny was on pins and needles, for courtesy required him to listen, but he wanted so much to discuss important matters of state, and he hated to steal this busy man's sleep time. He thought: Poor fellow, he looks so tired! F.D. had stuck on his man-killing job through a long hot summer, and then had gone out and fought his foes in a bitter political campaign.

Lanny took the first chance to remark on this; and the reply was: "It was a good fight, and I enjoyed every minute of it."

The visitor told how he had heard the returns in San Simeon, and how the host and guests had taken the licking. "That old crocodile!" exclaimed F.D. "There is the man this country will have to deal with some day!" When Lanny mentioned that his bags had been searched the President found it hard to believe, and exclaimed: "You don't tell me!"—and then: "By golly!" When Lanny

told of the test, he threw back his head and gave one of his hearty laughs.

After that they got down to business. "What are you planning to do?" asked the great man, and Lanny replied: "I am ready to go back to Europe and do whatever I can. Tell me what you want to know."

"I think Britain is going to hold out, and we can prepare for a long war. My military advisers tell me that Hitler cannot possibly effect a landing in winter, and by spring the British will be too strong in the air."

"I hope so, Governor. But they will need every ounce of help we can give them."

"You have read, no doubt, that I ordered the dividing of our military product, half for them and half for us. That is as far as Congress would let me go now. I have authorized Britain to contract for twelve thousand more military planes in this country; that makes more than twenty-six thousand altogether, and it ought to please your father greatly."

"It will, Governor; but the question is coming up very soon—how are they going to pay for all this? If you leave them to the mercy of the private banks, they will be plucked to the last feather; and you must realize that there is a very strong group among the British governing class who argue that if Britain has to part with her foreign holdings and become a debtor nation, they can get easier terms from Germany than from America."

"Don't think that I haven't had it pointed out to me. The big-money fellows are the same all over the world and they speak a universal language. It's a task I have to work on during this cruise, to find some way of helping our ally so that it won't be an outright gift but at the same time will give them a chance to breathe, financially speaking. I wish there was some way I could take you along on the cruise, but there inevitably would be publicity."

"Oh, of course; that would ruin me."

"What I'm going to tell our people is that when your neighbour's house is on fire, you lend him your hose to put the fire out, and you don't stop to bargain about what he is going to pay for the use of the hose."

"That's a good enough simile, Governor; but I'm afraid somebody may take it up and point out that if we really are a good neighbour we don't stop with lending the hose; we help to fight the fire."

The Chief made a wry face. "God knows, I hope it doesn't come to that! I can't imagine anything that would persuade the American people to come into this war. I would split the country in halves if I were to suggest it."

IV

They talked for a while about France. F.D. said the fear that troubled his sleep was of Hitler getting possession of the French Fleet and using it to break the British hold on the Mediterranean. "They tell me that is absolutely vital; and it's touch and go every moment."

"The miserable Mussolini"—so the President called him—hadn't been able to sit by while his partner grabbed territory. His fingers itched, and he had defied Hitler's orders and set out to grab Greece. He had thought that little country was helpless, and had rushed an army up into the mountains; but the British had furnished arms and the Greeks had used them and now the Fascist army was in rout. Also, Il Duce had an army in Africa, and was setting out to take Egypt; F.D. predicted that that army too would be soundly thrashed. But if the Germans got the French Fleet they might be able to break British sea power and take both the Suez Canal and the Strait of Gibraltar.

The President wanted information dealing with every aspect of that subject. Was Hitler going to send an army through Spain and attack Gibraltar? How was the Laval-Pétain struggle coming out, and what were our chances of dealing with General Weygand in North Africa? F.D. didn't say outright: "I want to check on our own diplomats in that field." What he said was: "Everybody has to be watched"—and Lanny grinned and replied: "Even the watchers!" He wondered if Baker had somebody watching P.A. 103.

The agent continued: "I have a contact with the underground in Vichy France, a man whom I have known for almost twenty years and who proved himself in the defence of Republican Spain. He told me he was going to Toulon, to try to build a movement among the sailors of the Fleet and the workers in the arsenal. There may be a possibility, you know, that the Fleet will some day sail out and join us. Unfortunately, the persons who work at that sort of job are always Socialists or Communists, and our State Department boys become paralysed with horror at the thought of them."

"Well, you work on your own, Lanny, and see what you can find out. As I've told you before, if you need money, it can come out of my secret funds."

"I don't want any money for myself, Governor; but there might be a possibility of using some in the movement, and if so I'll let you know. You'll have to arrange some way for me to communicate with you without having to come to London or Paris, because getting about is a difficult business in wartime."

"I am in a position to arrange it easily. I am appointing Admiral

Leahy as my personal representative to deal with Pétain. Leahy is a grand old boy, one of the officers who brought the battleship *Oregon* around the Horn during the Spanish-American War. He is a close friend of mine, and a Catholic, so he'll know how to talk to the Marshal."

"Is he another of the appeasers?"

"Quite the contrary, he's a man after your own heart; he thinks we are bound to get into the war sooner or later and it had better be at once. He won't like you in your role of Fascist sympathizer, and he's a salty old bird who says what he thinks—to Americans. I'll instruct him that he will receive letters marked 'Zaharoff,' and that he is to forward them to me unopened. Good hunting to you, Lanny!"

It was the time for the P.A. to offer to take his departure, and ordinarily he would have done so. But he had one other matter on his conscience and said: "May I keep you for a minute or two more, Governor?"

"Certainly. You have never worn out your welcome."

"I never mean to, if I can help it. What I want to ask is whether anybody has ever warned you that some of our near-Fascists might try to displace you."

"Oh, so you've come on that, too! It's all over the place, they tell me."

"But this is really serious, Governor."

"Well, tell me what you have heard."

The visitor told of his conversation with Baldur Heinsch, and of his trip to California, and what the Roosevelt-haters there were doing and saying. The President listened attentively, and then commented: "As to that Nazi chap, I have reason to think the F.B.I. may nail him down before long. As to the others, I will tell you that I have been informed of half a dozen such juntas within the last few months. It's amusing to note that they all propose to deal with me gently. It hasn't seemed to occur to them that I might not give up without a fight."

"Hitler didn't hesitate to murder half a dozen of the leading statesmen of Europe, Governor; and he's not through yet."

"I know it, and I'm being protected—much better than I tell about. This occurs to me, Lanny—did you ever meet Jim Stotzmann?"

"I have heard a lot about him, but I don't think we have met."

"He's been playing around in your parts of the world most of his life. I tell him that I'm his oldest friend—I was present at his

christening. You might be interested to meet him and hear what he has to reveal about our home-made insurrectionists."

"How should I meet him, Governor?"

"First you have to find him. He's a grasshopper, even more so than yourself. The rest will be easy, because he's a warm-hearted fellow and easy to know. Don't say what you're doing for me, and don't ask what he's doing—you understand, that isn't talked about."

"Surely not."

"Talk about mutual friends, of whom you must have a hundred. He knows everybody."

"But how about my supposedly being a near-Fascist?"

"He is one man who is worthy of your confidence. Pledge him not to mention your name to anybody, and you'll find his ideas and information helpful." The Chief thought for a moment, then added "I'll give you a card. Get me one out of that desk drawer." When Lanny had complied, the other scribbled with his pencil: "Top secret: F.D.R." and said: "Show him that, and then destroy it in his presence, so that both of you will know it won't go further. After that you will be pals for life."

"It sounds exciting," remarked the son of Budd-Erling. "There are eleven persons in the world who know that I am not a Fascist sympathizer. Stotzmann will make it an even dozen."

"Take care of yourself," said the Big Boss; and then, with a touch of concern: "Are you planning to go into Germany again?"

"I'm not sure," was the answer. "It depends on how events shape up, and whether I can get an invitation from one of the head devils. I won't take any great risk, because I want to stay alive and see you win this fight."

VI

It was the beginning of December, and the yacht *Oriole* had fled to southern waters, keeping its owner safe from throat and lung infections, or so he believed. Lanny telephoned and learned that Lizbeth had remained in Baltimore for a second winter. Did this mean she was obliging her mother and giving herself a chance to forget the unappreciative Lanny Budd? Or might it be that she was staying because she knew he was in the country, and hoped he would come again and change his mind? Lanny would have preferred not to call, but there was his duty to Robbie. It would have seemed rude indeed to pass through the city without speaking. The Holdenhursts might not learn about it, but Robbie would!

Lanny drove, and spent a day and night at Greenbriar, and told about his adventures in California, including the wonders of San

Simeon. He was aware that this made him more attractive to the girl, who could have imagined nothing more exciting than to have been taken along on that trip and to have met the semi-divine figures of the screen, also the publisher of the *Baltimore American*. It was second nature to Lanny to make himself agreeable to people; and what would have been the use of coming, unless he had intended to do so?

He saw Lizbeth hanging on his words, he saw the lovelight in her eyes. She had been brought up to be proud, and to think that she was important; but she was prepared to be humble to him, and for all her life. There began that old struggle within him. The poet has testified that pity melts the mind to love; and while it is an unsatisfactory basis for marriage, it is one of the baits that nature uses in her trap. The family left the pair ostentatiously alone, and it must have been very annoying to them when they heard him playing the piano for Lizbeth. There has not as yet been any technique invented by which a man can play classical music while his two arms are where a girl wants them to be.

Lanny kept saying to himself: "She would really admire Hearst! She would admire all the people whom I despise! It would be a crazy thing to do." But at the same time his blood kept saying that it would be a very pleasant thing to put his arms around Lizbeth; that indeed it was quite cruel not to do so. The rebellious blood kept inquiring: "What the devil are you here for?"—and Lanny had no convincing answer. The ladies had a party scheduled, and Lizbeth wanted him to stay and dance with her. To his mind came words from some old English dramatist: "My dancing days are done." But he didn't speak them to the girl. He told her that he had urgent business for his father, which was her father's business too.

Next morning he stepped into his car and headed northwards into a cold wind which promised more of the same. On the way he told himself that he would never again go back to Green Spring Valley; and each time his cynical blood said: "Ha, Ha!" In New York he phoned to Newcastle to report, and to make sure that the car wasn't needed. The tactful father didn't fail to inquire: "Did you stop at the Holdenhursts?"—and to add that Reverdy had taken another good-sized block of Budd-Erling stock before sailing. So Lanny knew that both Green Spring Valley and Newcastle were in league against him!

VII

There began another duel in the heart, or mind, or soul, or whatever it is a P.A. carries. He had duties to attend to; but greater than his interest in any of them was his desire to tell Laurel Creston about his

recent adventures. She was the person who really ought to hear them, and put them into little acid sketches. Not San Simeon—no, Lanny decided he would have to pledge her not to write about that; but the Hollywood stunt men and riders of the purple sage organized into a cavalry troop to put down the Jews of Boyle Heights—that would be real material for “Mary Morrow’s” subtle mockery.

So Lanny called on the telephone, and took her to lunch in another obscure café, and then for a drive. He put a robe around her small person, and took her up the east side of the Hudson, viewing the Palisades, and describing the two much longer drives he had enjoyed—but not mentioning whom he had taken along in his imagination, with or without clerical blessing. He told about various Hollywood parties; about Louella Parsons trying to be at once regal and girlish, about Major Hughes, partly deaf and entirely humourless, infuriated against the Reds and equally so against the psychic researchers; to Lanny he had denied the reality even of hypnotism, and had said, somewhat rudely, that it was all pure fraud. Also at the party had been Cecil de Mille, who had managed to combine “cheesecake” with early Christian martyrs and the Ten Commandments.

Laurel was delighted, as he had foreseen. “Do you mind if I make notes?” she asked, and Lanny said: “Of course not.” So she combined business with pleasure, something her escort had been doing ever since he had earned his first thousand dollars serving as secretary-translator to one of the American advisers at the Peace Conference of 1919.

They went on and on, for what were a few more miles to a man who had just driven three thousand in less than a week? They passed through the city of Poughkeepsie and presently were on a wide paved road, lined with old trees now denuded of leaves. “You are coming to Krum Elbow,” Lanny said, and when she asked: “What is that?” he told her: “The summer White House of our country; but it’s not occupied now.”

There was a sentry-box at the entrance, and two army men on duty, for it was wartime, even though not acknowledged. Lanny didn’t say: “I have been in there,” and Laurel didn’t ask. He wondered: Had she guessed who it was that he was serving? He could hear the dogmatic Major Hughes asking: “If there is anything to your telepathy rubbish, how could you sit alongside her, bursting with that secret, and she not getting the faintest hint of it?” How, indeed!

It was dark before they returned to New York, so they stopped for dinner. When he delivered her, just around the corner from her apartment, she thanked him for a delightful time, and the P.A. went off thinking: *That’s* the woman I ought to marry! *That’s* the one who

wouldn't bore me ! And then, of course : Where on earth would I hide her ? She's on the way to becoming famous, and the whole town will be after her. Answer that one, too !

VIII

A P.A.'s first duty was to report to Baldur Heinsch, and this he did next day. The steamship official was greatly excited, and invited Lanny to his apartment. "We can talk quietly here."

The guest wasn't under any obligation to report the truth to this man of no faith whatever, so he said that the Duce of San Simeon had been enormously interested in what had been proposed, and had said that he would back it, but only on condition that he was never to be named; he would deal only through Lanny, and he would first have to know the names of all the persons who were active in the proposed coup. Lanny had thought over every detail of this story, and weighed and measured every word; he made it circumstantial enough to be convincing, and thereby he was setting a trap for his pro-Nazi victim—a trap baited with a two-hundred-million-dollar fortune.

Would Heinsch step into the trap and blurt out the names of the conspirators ? He was greatly delighted, and for a while Lanny thought he was going to "come clean." But then he thought it over and said that he would have to consult his friends. Lanny agreed: "Of course; that's only fair to them." Inside his mind he wondered: Was there really any conspiracy, or was it just a tale which Hitler's secret agent had made up with the idea of getting hold of Hearst ? And would he now proceed to get together some conspirators to justify the carrying off of some chunks from the second-greatest fortune in America ? Long ago Lanny had come to realize that dealing with the Nazis you found one conspiracy inside another, like a set of those beautifully lacquered Chinese boxes that surprised and amused children. What the Chinese did with them Lanny had never learned.

Also the P.A. called on Quadratt, and remarked, casually: "I am expecting to leave for Europe any time now, and I may go in by way of Switzerland and see the Führer. Have you any message you would like me to give him ?" Quadratt claimed to have met the Führer personally, but Lanny wasn't at all sure that it was true; the Herr Doktor Goebbels was the person with whom he would more naturally have dealt. Anyhow, this would be a tactful way of letting him know that Lanny Budd was an important person, and one to whom it was worthwhile telling secrets !

"A long war, I fear," said the ex-poet mournfully; "and that

is the one thing the Führer was determined to avoid—so he told me."

"He told me the same," replied the son of Budd-Erling.

IX

On North Shore Drive, in what had been a remote suburb but now was Chicago, there stood a massive brownstone palace, and for three generations everybody who was anybody in the metropolis of pork packing had known that this was the home of the Stotzlmann family, descendants of the old pirate who had been the richest Middle-Westerner of his time. The building was four stories high, in imitation of a Louis Quatorze château, and the fence around the park was reported to have cost a hundred and fifty thousand dollars—people spent money for such things in those days, and their minds were a catalogue of such prices. The more things had cost the better they were and the more they were talked about, which was the best of all. "Three millions dollars!" people would say about the palace, and their voices would be lowered as if they were speaking of the dwelling place of deity.

Broad stairs went up to a great bronze gate and heavy double doors. It was difficult to imagine anyone being bold enough to enter through such doors, and in the times that Lanny had driven by the place he had never chanced to see them opened. But his friend and colleague Zoltan Kertezsi avowed that many years ago he had been admitted to inspect the art works inside. A family was supposed to be living there, but probably, like most rich people, they were away from home most of the time. Lanny had observed that the more money people had, the harder they found it to escape boredom.

Jim Stotzlmann was one of the heirs of this family, and evidently he had been bored in Chicago, for he was the author of several large books of travel and exploration. In *Who's Who* Lanny found his home listed as Palm Beach, Florida, and wrote duplicate letters there and to the family home. He said: "I have a card for you from a very important friend in Washington. It is marked 'Top secret,' and therefore I prefer to deliver it in person. For your information, I am an American art expert and have lived most of my life in France. I am at the Ritz-Waldorf, New York, awaiting your reply. In the event that you are away, my permanent address is in care of my father, Robert Budd, who is president of Budd-Erling Aircraft, Newcastle, Conn."

These letters were sent by airmail; and then Lanny went to a bookstore and bought all the works of Colonel James Stotzlmann that he

could find. He spent the better part of the next three days and nights getting "the low-down" on this new friend who had been vouched for upon such high authority. One of the books was the writer's life story, and so Lanny could learn about him in advance.

Jim Stotzlmann was one of those mysteries of Nature to which the biologists have given the name of "sport." For a thousand generations all flies of a certain species will have wings with grey spots; then suddenly one will appear with purple spots. And in the same way, in the palaces of privilege many generations of babies will be born who will eat what is fed to them and believe what is told to them, and grow up to be perfectly conventional members of fashionable society, wearing exactly the right clothes, thinking exactly the right thoughts, and doing exactly what all the other members of their set consider proper. But once in a blue moon will appear a freak, a black sheep, a crackpot—there will be many names for him—a child who will insist upon asking questions, and trying to make sure the answers are right; who will think for himself, and not as all the others think; who will not be sure that God in His Infinite Wisdom has entrusted to him the care of the property interests of the country. (Such were the public words of a great coal magnate during the childhood of Jim Stotzlmann and Lanny Budd.)

Jim and his sisters had been born and raised in that great brown-stone palace looking out over Lake Michigan, and had been bored to death in two "ideally equipped" schoolrooms in its uppermost floor. They had been taught exactly how to behave at receptions and teas, and how to grade their conversation and tone of voice according to the social importance of the ladies and gentlemen to whom they were introduced. Among these was the then President, Theodore Roosevelt, who sent the ten-year-old boy a formal invitation to have lunch at the White House, and there delivered to him a thirty-minute lecture on the life and ideals of Abraham Lincoln. That was the experience which really impressed the lad, and not the fact that by the time he was sixteen he had lunched and dined with every major crowned head of Europe.

Jim enlisted in the ranks and contributed his share to the blood and sweat of the war to make the world safe for democracy. When he came home he was not happy with the dancing wastrels of the North Shore and Lake Geneva smart set—any more than Lanny had been with those of Paris and the Côte d'Azur. He wanted to become a writer, and had gone out and got a newspaper job, with the

idea that that was the way to learn. Soon afterwards the paper was bought by Frank Munsey, who had made forty million dollars out of the publishing business and told Jim it was just luck. When Jim went to beg him not to dismiss the newspaper staff, the publisher told him to get out and mind his own damn business.

After that Jim wanted a paper of his own—a penny paper, to defend the rights of the common man. Chicago was the place for it, he decided, and since his family wouldn't help him, he took the advice of Lord Northcliffe and sold stock to the public. Then he found that it would take a long time to get a press. Being only twenty-five, and naïve and idealistic, he went to call on William Randolph Hearst at San Simcon, to ask permission to use his Chicago presses during the interim. The interview took place at the Ambassador Hotel, and Lanny, needless to say, was interested in the scene with that royal personality.

What he had said was: "There is no room in Chicago for another newspaper. I am just buying a newspaper in Dallas, Texas, and you may become the editor. You are a novice at the game, but you have a name that is worth money. Thirty thousand a year will do for a start. Go at once to Dallas by plane and report to the managing editor of my paper there. I will send you instructions from time to time. Good morning."

When Lanny Budd read that story he thought: My nameless services are worth nearly twice as much as the Stotzmann name! But then he reflected that this had been seventeen years ago, while America was still on the gold standard, and the value of money greater. He could just about regard himself as Jim's social equal!

XI

Several days passed, and Lanny had barely opened his eyes in the morning when the phone rang and a gentle voice said: "Is this Mr. Lanny Budd? This is Jim Stotzmann." Lanny said: "Oh, good! I was afraid you might be in Florida." Said the voice: "When can I come to see you?" Lanny thought it was up to him to call, but the other insisted: "I am only a couple of blocks away."

The son of Budd-Erling understood this form of self-protection. If a man calls on you it may be hard to get rid of him, but if you call on him, you can leave when you please. So he asked: "Would an hour from now be agreeable?" The answer was: "Fine!"

This "sport" of the Chicago orchid greenhouse proved to be a large fellow, as tall as Lanny and heavier. He had the face of an idealist who had been made to suffer in a cruel and ugly world. His

smile was warm, his manner deprecating and shy; his voice low, a little like a woman's. A generous and trusting person, not in the least suggestive of a secret agent, which Lanny had guessed from F.D.'s words that he really was. But then it was something Lanny had learned long ago, that spies do not look or act like spies—at least not if they are good ones, as Lanny himself tried to be.

Lanny presented his card, and the other took one glance at it. His face lighted up, and he exclaimed: "I guessed that was it. I am always happy to meet a friend of F.D.'s."

"The same to you, Mr. Stotzmann."

"Honestly, I have a crush on that man like a schoolgirl. I would die for him a hundred times, if such a thing were possible."

"Then we shall understand each other. I think the American people are lucky to have such a President in this crisis."

"I wish they realized how lucky they are, Mr. Budd."

"Indeed you are right; and I am terribly afraid they may desert him before long. That is what I went to him about, and why he wanted me to meet you."

"Tell me about it, by all means."

Lanny explained how as an art expert he had met Baldur Heinsch and had thought it the part of wisdom to pretend sympathy with this Nazi agent's point of view, so as to discover what he was up to. He told about California and the Roosevelt-haters there, and what they were talking and planning. The scion of North Shore Drive listened with attention, never once interrupting, but keeping his eyes on the speaker's face as if he were trying to read his inmost soul.

When Lanny finished, the other said: "The thing is all over the country, Mr. Budd, and you don't exaggerate the danger in the slightest degree. F.D.'s enemies hate him with such fury that they don't keep silence even in my presence, though most of them know exactly how I feel. I have heard them calling for somebody to shoot him—and not merely in New York and Washington, but in country clubs and nightspots all over. You know I get about a lot——"

"F.D. told me you were a grasshopper," smiled Lanny.

"Mostly it is shellshock from the last war; I have never got over it, and can't bear to stay in one place very long. Also, I suppose, it was my upbringing; I got my education on the run."

"I spent most of the last three days reading your books."

"Oh, how kind! Then you know exactly how I feel about our toasting rich. And you won't need any assurance that I agree with you about Hearst. He is one of the most unscrupulous and most dangerous men in America. He stops at nothing to get his way. And there are many like him. I could compile quite a list from my personal experience."

XII

"I suppose," said the old pirate's descendant, "that F.D. intend for me to give you the real dope. You must understand that what am going to say is the very last word in secrecy."

"You may count upon me absolutely, Mr. Stotzmann."

"To begin with, let's not stand on ceremony. You can understand that I don't enjoy my family name very much; it's a sort of gold mac studded with diamonds, and when its waved in front of people's eye they become dizzy, and I become bored. Call me Jim and let me call you Lanny."

"Fine!" said the other. "As F.D. likes to say: Shoot!"

"Well, the contacts you have made in Hollywood may be the edge of the same conspiracy, but the centre of it, and the really dangerous part, is in New York and Chicago, and in Washington. It is spreading through several government organizations, and at the heart of it are three of our top-ranking personalities."

"Good God, Jim!"

"You understand, I am in touch with many of our top-notchers. I play around a lot; I like people, and if I stay alone I get to worryin' about the world. I've lived with the super-rich since I first opened my eyes, and there are few whom I haven't met in the course of years. They all know I'm a maverick, and quarrel with me, but they're no very good at keeping secrets. You know their attitude: 'What the hell?'"

"I have met a lot of them," Lanny mentioned.

"My knowledge of this conspiracy began last summer, through a fellow I know in the advertising game—which is a small-sized gold mine. He got into a jam about his income taxes—they are complicated you know, and maybe it wasn't his fault; anyhow, he had come to Washington and he was damning That Man and his sheeny gang; he was half drunk, and he said, by God he and his friends were going to can the whole lousy lot. I pretended not to believe him, and so he got mad and spilled the story. 'Go and talk to Harrison Dengue' he said. 'Tell him I sent you and he'll tell you about it.' Do you know Dengue?"

"Only by hearing my father speak of him."

"Well, he's a typical big-money autocrat. They are gods, and the don't let any stockholders or board of directors check them."

"Only Congress?" put in Lanny.

"They hate the New Deal congressmen reformers like snakes, and they hold F.D. responsible because he's one who knows how to get the votes and keep the congressmen in power. They have an utter contempt for the democratic process and for everybody who professes

it. Dengue is a man whose favourite diversion is seducing the wives of his fellow-officials—especially those who can't do anything about it because he is in a position to break them. He looks like a bull and acts like one."

"I know the type; and they are not confined to any special group. The big-business world is full of them."

"What the American people do not realize is that officialdom to-day is big business. The higher men associate exclusively with the plush-lined set. Imagine any one of them putting his feet under the dinner table of a poor man! They come to my mother's parties, half a dozen at a time, and believe me, the secretary has to know about precedence. When they open their mouths, it might be Hearst or our own Colonel McCormick."

"Don't forget, Jim, my father sold munitions, and my grandfather and his father made them."

"Of course, you know it all. Well, Dengue has tremendous power in the parts of the country where it will be needed. And then there's Poultiss, and there's Harrigues—these three are the dynamos, and will be the triumvirate."

"What exactly are they planning to do?"

"They are waiting for some public emergency, riots, or a big strike—there's a coal strike coming, I believe. They will send a bunch of their men to take charge of the district which includes Hyde Park; they will cut the telephone wires to the place and seize the President. They will use the radio stations to tell the public that there was a plot against the President's safety and that they are protecting him; they will issue orders in his name."

"But, do they imagine Roosevelt will submit?"

"What can he do, Lanny, a crippled man who can hardly get about? They will make sure that nobody gets near him but their crowd."

"They think the country will be fooled by such a trick?"

"What can the country do? This crowd have the guns—believe me, they have plenty—riot guns, tommy-guns, tear-gas guns, sawed-off shotguns, and poison gas if needed. They know all the strategic spots in the country, and will occupy them."

"But will their forces obey them?"

"Orders will be issued to the army in the President's name. Some of the officers may suspect that the orders are phony, but how can they be sure? By the time they wake up to what is happening they will be in custody, and somebody will be keeping them quiet."

"But the army rank and file, Jim!"

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"What can the country do? This crowd have the guns—believe me, they have plenty—riot guns, tommy-guns, tear-gas guns, sawed-off shotguns, and poison gas if needed. They know all the strategic spots in the country, and will occupy them."

"But will their forces obey them?"

"Orders will be issued to the army in the President's name. Some of the officers may suspect that the orders are phony, but how can they be sure? By the time they wake up to what is happening they will be in custody, and somebody will be keeping them quiet."

"But the army rank and file, Jim!"

"The rank and file will obey orders—what's an army for? There will be attempts at resistance, of course, but the junta will put them

down. I'm not saying they can do it, mind you; I'm saying they believe they can, and they mean to try."

"You are sure it's a real thing, and not just gossip?"

"As certain of it as a man can be of anything human. I am not at liberty to go into details; but telephone wires have been tapped and people have been followed and conversations recorded over a period of several months."

"You have reported this to F.D.?"

"I have reported to him, and to the persons he has ordered me to."

"And what is he doing about it?"

"He doesn't tell me, except in hints. He refuses to worry about it—he's not the worrying kind, you know. He insists that he can deal with the gang in an inconspicuous way, without a scandal that would injure the national morale. He will send the suspected men to some district a long way off."

"But somebody ought to point out to F.D. that it doesn't take a plane very long to fly from any part of the country. The Republican Government of Spain tried that same device with General Franco some five years ago. They exiled him to the Canary Islands, but it didn't keep him from continuing with his conspiracy, and when the time came, he was on deck."

"Quite so," agreed Jim, "and be sure I have talked to the Chief about it. He says that he has his plans, and naturally I can't ask him too many questions. When I get information, I take it to him."

Lanny sat for a while in silence, then he said: "This thing takes my breath away."

"It has me worried sick," replied Jim. "Since F.D. refuses to worry, I've taken the job on."

"What strikes me especially is the resemblance to what I saw in France shortly before the war broke out. Do you know about the Cagouard conspiracy?"

"Only what I read in our papers."

"It happened that I was close to it. The de Bruyne family, old friends of mine, were among its backers. It was a conspiracy to overthrow the Third Republic and gaol its leading officials. Only this summer Admiral Darlan told me with his own lips that he had planned to put the Leftists among the French naval officers on board the antiquated battleship *Jean Bart* and take her out to sea and sink her."

"The men I have named to you would hardly have that much imagination," remarked the serious-minded Jim.

"I was struck by your statement that F.D. doesn't want a scandal because of the bad effect on morale. That's exactly why the Cagoule was never purged in France; there were more than five hundred army officers involved in the plot, and the Cabinet voted against Léon Blum and Marx Dormoy, who wanted to root them out. The result was, they stayed in the army and went on making appeasement propaganda, even in the midst of war."

"The propaganda of this bunch is anti-Jew, anti-Russian, and to some extent anti-British. It is closely tied up with the Catholic hierarchy—the Papal Knights and the Papal Delegates and our millionaires who back them."

"There you have it! Franco Spain, and the intrigues of the Nazis in South America—these are all parts of the same world conspiracy!"

"I see you know the game," said Jim. "It happens that Harrison Dengue's present mistress is a Nazi countess whose brother is one of the leading Nazi agents in Buenos Aires."

"Does that happen to be the Gräfin Schönen?"

"Dora Schönen, the same!"

"But she was the mistress of Otto Abetz, Nazi Governor of Paris."

"Well, maybe he got tired of her; or maybe the Nazis sent her here, to build up the American Cagoule. They don't let love—or passion, or whatever you choose to call it—stand in the way of politics. That would be weakness."

"I met that lovely lady; and unless I am mistaken, she has some of the evil Jewish blood."

"Quite possibly, she may be an honorary Aryan. That's another detail in which the gang over here is following the Nazis. There are wealthy Jews in the group. Dengue's finger man here in New York is a Jew who changed his name; he is a crafty anti-Democrat, who despises Roosevelt. The gang has a code name for Jews; they are 'Number Three.' You understand, our officialdom is not supposed to discriminate against them."

"But the country clubs do, and the dinner parties!"

"You can bet on that," remarked the man from North Shore Drive. "Believe me, I have helped to make out the lists for hundreds of smart affairs."

XIV

These two who had become fast friends upon one glimpse of a visiting card behaved as if they would never stop talking. Lanny had read Jim's books, but Jim had many stories that were not in the books, and Lanny wanted to hear them all. Jim wanted to know about Lanny.

where and how he lived and what he was doing. Lanny explained that in his youth he had become a Pink, but in recent years he had begun to change his colouration, as a means of getting information for friends abroad, and later for some in America. That was as near as he would come to saying the letters "P.A."; but that was near enough. He added: "If you ever speak of me to anyone except F.D., remember that I'm a near-Fascist and friend of all the top Nazis. Don't say anything good about me!"

"It will be better not to know you, and that we meet privately. You could be tremendously useful to me in running down the members of this gang."

"I would be glad to do it, but at the moment I have another commission, and must return to France. I come here every few months, and then I'll look up your three top conspirators and give them the latest news from their friends in Vichy France and Spain."

"I had better give you the code name for this group; among themselves they are 'SG's.' I have never been able to find out what that stands for, but their purpose is to 'save America,' they tell themselves. There are sincere fanatics among them, but others are self-seekers, impatient men, and arrogant—the type of Aaron Burr, if you remember the details of his conspiracy. There are several senators and congressmen in their confidence, men who are highly placed in the committees, and very powerful. It is a movement that is steadily expanding and solidifying itself. The further F.D. goes in carrying out his policies, the more his enemies are automatically driven together. That is something he himself is reluctant to face, but his friends keep pounding at him and he's beginning to wake up."

"I believe I may have helped a little," said Lanny. "Coming to him independently of you and all the others, my statements should have carried weight."

"What I want most to do," continued the other, "is to persuade him to take Hyde Park out of the New York Military District and put it under the direct control of Washington. If the Chief hadn't gone off on this cruise, I would urge you to go back and press that idea upon him."

Lanny couldn't say: "He has ordered me abroad." His answer was: "I hope to God there aren't any admirals among your SG's!"

BOOK THREE

HE THAT DIGGETH A PIT

9

Set Thine House in Order

I

LANNY drove back to Newcastle to return the borrowed car and say his farewells. Budd-Erling had got its share of those twenty-six thousand planes which F.D. had permitted the British to order, and now the President of Budd-Erling was under pressure from the brass-hats to expand some more. His son compared him to an infant who has reached out for a nipple and got the nozzle of a hose. Everybody in the town was under the pressure of that hose, it appeared; the old-timers complained that social life was at an end and there was no room to get around on the streets. Robbie no longer came home to lunch, but ate a sandwich and drank a glass of milk in his office. The two sturdy sons of Robbie and Esther were like a pair of faithful dray-horses pulling in harness, and with new loads being piled on to the dray.

At Lanny's request the father put in an application for Lanny's passport to Europe. The arrangement with President Roosevelt had been that Robbie was to apply to a certain official in the War Department, on the ground that Lanny was travelling on Budd-Erling business. "War" would make the arrangements with "State," and thus there would be no ground for suspicion that Lanny was anything other than the son of Budd-Erling. The passport was to be for Portugal, Spain, Vichy France, Switzerland, Germany, and Britain. There were many persons in New York and Washington who, for reasons of their own, would have paid large sums of money for such a document, but couldn't get it because of the government's stern policy of restricting travel in the war zones.

Lanny waited; and meantime, there was private business in Newcastle. Christmas was coming, and it was too bad to leave just before that! One of Esther's nieces was coming home from the Harvard School of Art, and her aunt was giving her a party. Couldn't Lanny be tempted to stay over for that? Lanny's stepmother, the subtlest of psychological manipulators, didn't drop any hints concerning love

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and marriage; what she said was that the family saw so little of Lanny and enjoyed his conversation so much; also, that the dangers in Europe both on land and sea, were so frightful in these times, and what was there in the business of old masters or in that of military planes that made it worth while for him to risk his life?

Margaret Remsen was the girl's name, and they called her Peggy. Lanny hadn't seen her for a couple of years, and what a change that time can make in a young woman's mind. She was a proper young lady of New England, conscientious and studious as anyone in Esther's family was bound to be; also she was extraordinarily eager and alert to what was going on about her. Had her aunt by any chance prompted her? She knew all about Lanny's art experting, and also his political experting. She wanted to hear about the extraordinary people he had met, and listened with attention to every word that fell from his lips. Nothing could be more acceptable to the male ego.

Lanny went off and thought it over. Here was one more temptation, one more emotional disturbance. Peggy was related to him only by her aunt's marriage and not by blood; he was perfectly eligible on that score. Manifestly, she liked him, and manifestly he had seen more of the great world than anybody she was likely to meet in an overgrown river port on Long Island Sound. Lanny wondered if she was going to take the place of Lizbeth in his imagination—or would it be the place of Laurel? She was a sort of combination of the two. She was young, and some day she would have a lot of money, for her father was president of the First National Bank of Newcastle, and her grandfather had founded that institution, which did all the business of Budd-Erling and a good part of Budd Gunmakers. Also Peggy had brains, and had read quite a number of books—something that fashionable ladies talked about more often than they did.

Lanny wondered now and then about the impact on American society of this fresh crop of young females who had got an education and were seemingly determined to think for themselves. From his point of view these young people were victims of a conspiracy of press and radio, of church and school and political platform, to persuade them that the so-called American way of life, the "free enterprise system," was the only free system conceivable and the only one compatible with democracy. To be sure, it meant plenty of freedom for Robbie Budd, the employer, but for the masses of workers it was the old familiar wage slavery. Now Lanny sat at his stepmother's luncheon table and heard Peggy Remsen sum up her ideas on the subject: "It seems to me it would be a lot more democratic if the workers made their own jobs, instead of having Uncle Robbie make them all." Lanny said nothing, for of course such problems lay outside the province of an art expert.

II

The passport was delayed; and Robbie phoned to "War" and was referred to "State." He phoned to "State," and was told that the matter was under consideration. That was the way with bureaucrats; they hold matters under consideration until the world comes to an end. So Lanny, who had told himself that his dancing days were done, went to the party in the Newcastle Country Club; he was one of two-score properly dressed gentlemen who danced with Peggy and paid her compliments, all of which she deserved, because she looked very lovely and behaved with gaiety and charm. Lanny had attended just such a party at the home of Lizbeth Holdenhurst, and he told himself that he had broken Lizbeth's heart, or at any rate cracked it, and now he was a philanderer, and in danger of doing the same thing to his stepmother's niece.

Finally, there came a letter on elegant stationery, instructing him to call upon a representative of the State Department in New York. So he went, and met a man considerably younger than himself who looked like a college instructor, the kind that Robbie Budd especially abhorred. With the most elegant manners Mr. Titherington put Lanny Budd through an inquisition as to what he wanted to do in Europe, and why he considered himself entitled to special favours. This investigation wasn't supposed to happen at all; F.D. had given special orders to "War" that the president of Budd-Erling was to have whatever passports he requested for himself or his son. Lanny had said: "I suppose that 'State' will do whatever 'War' requests"; but apparently this had been naïve. Had somebody blundered? Or were there bureaucrats so full of their own importance that they used their judgment concerning orders even from the head of the United States Government?

Lanny was treading on eggs in this office. He couldn't give the faintest hint that the President was interested in his errands abroad; he couldn't even refuse to answer questions and say that he would take the matter to higher authority, for that might affront the young man and make a malicious enemy. Lanny knew that all bureaucrats live under siege by newspapermen; some hate them and some love them, but all fear them; and suppose this Mr. Titherington were to say to a reporter friend: "Do you know anything about this chap Lanny Budd who calls himself an art expert and claims the privilege of travelling all over Europe in wartime? He is the son of Robbie Budd of Budd-Erling, and you might find it worth while to look him up and find out what he's doing." It might be that some radio news broadcaster would ask this question over the air, some Nazi agent would make note of it—and that would be the end of a P.A. forever!

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Lanny explained with great patience and politeness that he had a mother in Juan-les-Pins, and a little daughter in England. To this the conscientious bureaucrat replied that there were many Americans in positions of the same sort, but unfortunately the State Department had had to rule against all such requests. Still patiently, Lanny explained that he had orders for several paintings in Vichy France, and must go there to attend to them. To this the polite bureaucrat replied that all commercial matters had to be attended to by mail, if at all. Pushed to the wall, Lanny became mysterious, and revealed that there were certain matters having to do with the designs of the new Budd-Erling pursuit plane; certain improvements which had been effected in recent French models and about which Lanny had been promised the blueprints. It was a matter of the greatest urgency, which was why the application had come through the War Department. The persistent bureaucrat wanted to know why the Swiss trip was necessary, and Lanny said that one of the men with whom he was dealing might be in that country.

The upshot of it all was that the application would be taken "under consideration" and that Lanny would hear from "State." Lanny realized that this Mr. Titherington was only doing what he had been told to do, and it wasn't fair to blame him for wartime restrictions. Lanny believed in the bureaucrats, as the only alternative to the business autocrats at the present stage of social development. But at the same time it was most exasperating. He couldn't phone to Baker about the matter, because Baker wasn't supposed to know his name. He thought of calling upon Professor Alston, who had introduced him to F.D., and must share in the secret, even though he had never spoken to Lanny about it. But the newspapers reported that Charles Alston, whom they referred to as "the fixer," had that day been flown by plane to join the President on his cruise.

III

So there was nothing to do but wait until F.D.'s return. Lanny decided that he wouldn't go back to Newcastle, where Esther and Peggy might be lying in wait for him. Or would they? He decided to take no chances, but to enjoy himself with his friend and art colleague. Zoltan Kertezsi, and see what new things the dealers had to offer, and what, if any, had been added to the museums. Also, he would pay another call on Baldur Heinsch and give him a chance to say whether or not the conspirators were willing to have Lanny Budd know their names and to pass them on to the Duce of San Simeon.

What the steamship official reported was that the heads of the

junta hadn't been able to make up their minds; they wanted to investigate Lanny Budd, and Lanny said that was perfectly natural—unless they were fools they wouldn't risk their necks without taking every precaution. In his secret thoughts Lanny wondered whether Heinsch really knew anything, or was pretending to have information as a means of getting some. Lanny changed the subject, and after a while went to call on Forrest Quadratt, and, talking about various persons whom they both knew, he remarked: "By the way, I wonder if you know Harrison Dengue?"

"I have met him several times," replied the ex-poet casually. He was a well-trained intriguer, and if he was surprised he wouldn't show any trace of it. "Do you know him?"

"I don't think I have met him, but my father has told me about him. I should think he would be a useful man to both of us."

"That might be a good suggestion. Miss van Zandt knows him well, I believe."

Lanny didn't say: "I'd like to meet him." He seldom pushed himself; his role was that of an easy-going person, a sort of *flâneur* of the arts, and always it was Quadratt who was using him, never he who was using Quadratt. "I see that Senator Reynolds is in town," he remarked. "There is a character out of a story-book."

"I had lunch with him yesterday," responded the other. "He remembers you well and asked about you. He went to Germany, you know, and came back delighted with what he found."

"If only we could take the American people for a trip through Germany, there would be an end to the lies of the Jewish press." In this Lanny was repeating what he had read only that week in the *Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter*, published in Yorkville, a section of New York.

Lanny said no more on this subject. He talked about his projected trip abroad, and complimented Quadratt by asking his advice as to whether the Führer would wish to meet an American under the painful circumstances existing. "I couldn't blame him if he never wished to hear of another." The Nazi agent replied that the Führer was a broad-minded man and would surely not hold an old friend responsible for the malicious intrigues of a Roosevelt. Lanny told how cordial the great leader had been in Paris, and about the genuineness of his longing for reconciliation with the British Empire; then he spoke of Lord Wickthorpe, and the significance of his resignation—Lanny exaggerated it greatly. The movement for an understanding was far more widespread than the American press allowed the public to guess.

"At any rate," said the ex-poet, "you and I can be sure that we have done everything in our power to end this madness."

IV

Jim Stotzmann had said that Harrison Dengue was in New York at this time, so Lanny was not surprised when, on the following afternoon, there was delivered to his hotel a handwritten invitation to dine the following evening at the home of Miss Hortensia van Zandt "to meet Mr. Dengue and Senator Reynolds." Lanny had guessed that the eager agent would set to work via the telephone, and that the fanatical old lady who was one of Quadratt's financial backers would be no less prompt. In these times of blockade and censorship not many personal friends of the Führer were available in New York.

Lanny accepted by the same formal method, and at half-past six he left his hotel for a walk down Fifth Avenue. It was a crisp winter evening, and looking up through the steep canyon walls he saw bright stars, seeming very close. The time was between the rush of shopping traffic and theatre traffic, but even so the great thoroughfare was crowded, and its bright lights were veiled by a grey-blue haze. Jewellery shops, fur shops, art shops, tall office buildings, and hotels lined what had once been the residential street of the "Four Hundred." The display of luxury goods was like no other in the world, for Congress had just authorized more billions for military goods. Farther down on this narrow island was the financial centre through which the money must pass, and be sure that sooner or later a lot of it would find its way to these shops.

Miss van Zandt was the New York hostess of two generations ago; tall, thin, and white-haired, stubborn, stiff, and proud. Her mansion on the lower Avenue had been entirely engulfed by the clothing trade, but she refused to move; that was her manner of waging war on the Jews and the Reds, who to her mind were one and the same. She wore a long black evening gown of real silk, and a velvet collar studded with diamonds hid the tendons of her thin neck. Nowadays the *grandes dames* had imitations made of their jewels and wore these, keeping the real ones—which everybody knew they had—locked up in bank vaults. Lanny guessed that this hostess would scorn such modernisms.

The present was an intellectual occasion, and she chose to dine alone with her three important gentlemen. Forrest Quadratt didn't show up, and Lanny guessed that he himself had suggested this; the occasion would be one of simon-pure Americanism, and no one of the guests would be troubled by the idea that the Germans were responsible for it. First came "Buncombe Bob"—by an odd quirk of fate he had been born in Buncombe County, in the state which he called No'th Ca'lina. He had once been a barker, selling patent medicines in a circus, and by lung power and genius he had

risen to become Chairman of the Military Affairs Committee of the United States Senate, a position of the greatest power, which he intended with God's help to use in keeping God's country out of foreign wars, especially the wars of a power which had captured and burned the city of Washington only a hundred and twenty-seven years ago.

And then came Harrison Smithfield Dengue, a person concerning whom Lanny Budd had developed a sudden and intense curiosity. One could see at a glance that he was a man accustomed to commanding, and to being obeyed. He was a big fellow, and the swelling was in his chest and not below. He had a red complexion and wore a closely cropped grey moustache. He sat in his chair looking like a statue of capacity and determination. He didn't say much, but then nobody had to, so long as Buncombe Bob was in the company.

This Senator of the hillbillies was one of the most active and determined advocates of Fascism in the Western World; but Lanny reflected that quite possibly he didn't know it was Fascism and would have been indignant at the term. What he called it was Americanism, or plain hundred-per-cent. patriotism. America was the greatest country in the world, and she was that because of her institutions under which a patent-medicine vendor had risen to be a leading statesman and associate of millionaires. The Senator would have declared that any man who had ability and was willing to work hard enough could do the same. He was about to marry the daughter of a leading Washington hostess, author of a volume entitled *Father Struck It Rich*. Evalyn's father had struck a gold mine, and now Evalyn owned the Hope diamond, the biggest in the world, and wore it on her bosom at parties to which she invited swarms of people who were Fascists and didn't know it, and some who did.

v

Don't let yourself be fooled by this statesman's bland round smiling face and black hair cut long like a poet's or a pianist's. He is one of the most determined and aggressive men in the land, and if the Reds think they are going to be allowed to spread their ideas and if the Jews think they are going to be allowed to continue making all the money, the Senator is going to teach them better. He has just been to Germany and discovered that everybody there is working hard, and happy, in spite of the war which was forced upon them. He tells once more the story of what he found there, and the other three persons at the dinner table do not interrupt. The Senator has learned how the National-Socialist miracle was brought about, and he is

publishing a weekly paper, the *American Vindicator*, to tell all patriotic citizens about it. Also he has founded an organization, the *Vindicators*, which provides its members with red, white, and blue feathers and red, white, and blue badges. There is a section for youth, called the *Border Patrol*, and they also wear feathers and badges, and carry banners and sing songs—in short everything the *Hitlerjugend* has, excepting only the “daggers of honour.” The Senator doesn’t say that the whole of the McLean fortune is behind this effort to “save America,” and Lanny guesses that this is because the great man hopes to get a sizable check from his hostess when the evening is over.

When Buncombe Bob’s tale is told, the hostess turns to Lanny and remarks: “I understand, Mr. Budd, that you were in Paris last summer and met the Führer and others.”

So it is Lanny’s turn, and he relates what he saw and heard. Mr. Dengue is interested, and asks how he managed to gain the confidence of these exalted persons. Lanny tells, for perhaps the thousandth time, how it came about, and how the Führer commissioned him to tell the French people how he, the Führer, loves the French, and to tell the British people how he loves the British, and to tell the American people how he loves the Americans. In short, Adi Schicklgruber is a man made wholly of love, and hatred has no part in his being. He goes to war because other people force him in, and never ceases to plead for the end of hostilities. Lanny can say all this with a perfectly straight face and be certain that none of his three hearers will suspect any irony.

A most unusual story, how an American art expert was commissioned to travel back and forth with secret messages from the mistress of the Premier of France to the husband of his own former wife. “It sounds melodramatic,” he remarked. “It happens that we are living in melodramatic times, and the novelists and playwrights of a thousand years hence will be finding their material in the things that have been going on in Europe during the past ten.” There were no novelists or playwrights at this dinner table, only the most serious-minded reformers. Mr. Dengue wanted to know how sincere the Führer was in his hatred of Red Russia, and what were the prospects of his taking that country on, if by chance the statesmen of Britain could be persuaded to agree to a settlement.

It was the red-faced gentleman’s turn, and the hostess said: “Tell us what you think about the prospects for peace.”

So the man of power sang for his supper. He remarked that ordinarily any nation would be well satisfied to see its leading rivals fight each other, and he would have no objection to letting the British Empire and the German Reich go to it as long as they pleased. But there was the Red Terror of the Kremlin in the background, gloating

over the spectacle and ready to march into the vacuum which the war would create in Central and perhaps in Western Europe. That was something in which no sane man could take pleasure, and for that reason Mr. Dengue wanted a truce patched up as quickly as possible.

"That," remarked Lanny, "is exactly what is in the Führer's mind, as he has explained it to me scores of times." No offence was intended and none was taken, for Lanny's auditors would have no objection to agreeing with the Führer—or rather, as they would have phrased it, to having the Führer agree with them.

"The danger," continued Dengue, "is increased by the fact that our own Commander-in-Chief is so determined to bring us into the conflict. If that happens, we may no longer find ourselves with the power to deal with Russia, as some time we shall surely have to do."

Said the hostess: "Many times I find myself thinking that the destiny of our country in this crisis is in the hands of a man who is actually and literally insane."

"That would be a matter of definition," the other replied. "He is a man who is determined to have his own way, and his judgment is far from sound."

"How much does he know about the world he lives in?" broke in the Senator. "He is a millionaire, but he has never earned a dollar in his life—unless you count what he gets for his Christmas trees."

"A Christmas-tree grower for President, and an apple grower for Secretary of the Treasury!" remarked Dengue, and added: "Jew apples!"

"Perhaps these are some of them," chuckled Lanny, nodding toward the dish of fruit in the centre of the table. So they all had a laugh, and felt more and more friendly as the wines were passed. When in the course of the evening Lanny revealed that he was returning to Vichy France on his father's business, and that he might go into Germany and meet Hess and perhaps Hitler, Dengue remarked: "I wish that when you come back, Mr. Budd, you would let me know what you have learned."

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure," replied the P.A.—and there was more truth in this than in other things he had said that evening.

VI

The newspapers recorded the culmination of the struggle between Laval and Pétain. The aged Marshal had deposed his faithless subordinate and placed him under arrest, and Otto Abetz, Nazi Governor

of Paris, had flown to Vichy to Laval's rescue. It is at times of crisis such as this that men become excited and reveal secrets, and Lanny ought to have been there to avail himself of the opportunity. He was like a racehorse champing behind a barrier, but there was nothing he could do. He tried to get Baker on the telephone, but Baker wasn't there, and Lanny couldn't find out where he was without giving his name. The President had come back from his brief cruise and was at Warm Springs, Georgia; Lanny would gladly have gone there, but he couldn't find Baker there, and he would surely not be able to get near the President without giving his name to somebody.

Two weeks after the vacation had begun, Lanny read that the Big Boss was back in the White House, and at once it was possible to get Baker. Matters would have been simplified if Lanny had been able to say: "Tell the Chief my passports have been delayed." But Baker wasn't supposed to know that Zaharoff 103 was getting any passports. All Lanny could say was: "Tell the Chief I have to see him for a minute or two about an important matter." The order came back: "Fly on the six o'clock plane and meet me at nine-forty-five to-night."

So Lanny found himself in the familiar bedroom in which many early-morning and late-evening conferences were being held during these crowded and perilous days. F.D. looked bronzed and refreshed—it was truly amazing what a few days of rest and recreation could do for this overburdened man. He had been poking about in coves and inlets which had once been the haunt of pirates and were soon going to be sites of great naval and air installations, designed to keep enemy U-boats forever away from the southern approaches to the United States and the Panama Canal.

Lanny knew what a mass of duties must be pressing upon the President now, and he wanted to come to the point and then go. "Governor, I was ready to leave for France a couple of weeks ago, but I haven't been able to get passports. 'State' has the matter under advisement, as they tell me."

"Damn!" exclaimed the "Governor" and slapped the blue-silk coverlet of his bed. "Isn't that the limit? It shows you what I am up against in trying to get things done!"

"What it seems to show," ventured the caller, "is what I've been trying to tell you for three years, that you need a house-cleaning in 'State.'"

"I can't do it, Lanny. All these people are established, and all have influence. In times like these my first thought has to be to keep support in Congress. If I order the firing of a single filing clerk I earn the enmity of some congressman who got him the job."

"Well, Governor, here I sit waiting, while the filing clerk makes

up his mind whether my phony excuses for wanting to get into Switzerland are good enough."

"I'll see that the passports are delivered to your father at once."

"Don't be too vehement about it," cautioned Lanny. "It might cause gossip about me."

The other broke into one of his hearty laughs. "There you have it! You don't want any publicity; multiply your problem by about a million, and you have some idea of mine!"

"I know you're crowded," said the dutiful agent, and got up to leave.

But the crowded one would ever have it that way. "Tell me," he said, "did you meet Jim?"

Lanny thought: This man never forgets anything! Inside his large head was a living encyclopedia of names, places, dates, and things having to do with his job which he so loved and enjoyed, difficult and dangerous though it was. Lanny sat down again, and told about his conference with the scion of the Windy City.

"Grand fellow!" said F.D. "Nobody who knows him can fail to love him."

"His story took my breath away," replied the other. "I still can't convince myself that it's real."

This was a hint, and the President replied: "I don't think Jim overestimates the evil purposes of that bunch; but he underestimates my other sources of information, and the precautions I have taken which naturally I can't talk about freely."

"Of course not. I think you may be interested to know that I met Harrison Dengue." Lanny told the story of the affair at Miss van Zandt's, and added: "I was careful not to hint at the conspiracy, but I got an invitation to come back to him, and when I have cultivated him a little more he may let me in on the inside. Shall I bring the facts to you or to Jim?"

"To both," was the reply. "I trust Jim's devotion completely, but of course I can't trust any man's judgment completely. If it's an important matter I have to make my own decision."

The President went on to discuss these "headstrong men," as he called them. "I didn't make the national machinery," he said, "and I have to take it as I find it. Many of its officials are conservative—they come from the conservative classes, and don't shed their ideas when they take a public job. Some of the most efficient men are the most reactionary, but I'm not asking for their ideas, only for their services, and I can't take action against them for what they say, only for what they do."

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VII

Once more the P.A. thought that his duty was done, and he started to get up from his chair. But once more the Boss wanted to talk. "I don't see you very often," he remarked; "and I see a lot of people who know less. Tell me what you make of this blow-up in Vichy."

So Lanny had to deliver one of his discourses, explaining the difference between the two men who had been in control of the puppet government of Unoccupied France. One was a man of no principles whatever, willing to hire himself to the Nazis as he had previously hired himself to the Comité des Forges, the organization of the French steel and munitions masters. The other was a man of the most rigid principles, a devout Catholic, doing everything in his power to save France, but meaning the ancient Catholic France, governed by a benevolent paternalism. The Marshal enjoyed the confidence of many Frenchmen, while Laval was despised even by his own gang. The Marshal was old and feeble, and had never been a man of vigour; in the old days his superior, Marshal Foch, had said of him: "When there is nothing to do, the job is Pétain's." Lanny added: "Perhaps that is the job he has now. The Nazis demand action, and this stubborn old martinet promises, and then finds excuses and delays, and nothing happens."

"What do you think the Germans will do to him?"

"I wouldn't like to guess, but it's a safe bet that they won't let him do anything to Laval; the Nazis need both of them too badly. They don't want to have to occupy the rest of France in the present state of their affairs."

"Where are they going? Into the Balkans?"

"It looks like that. If they could get Greece and Crete, they would be within bombing range of Suez, and that would make it hard for the British. They will be heading for oil, whether in Mesopotamia or the Caucasus. The fate of Europe hangs in the balance there."

The President thought for a moment, then said: "I'll tell you a secret, Lanny, something very hush-hush. It will make you happy."

"Well, Governor, frankly, I could do with a little happiness right now."

"This is something you've been begging of me for a long time. I'm going all out for aid to Britain; not military, of course, but financial, and everything we can manufacture that they need. Lothian's last report convinced me that it can't be put off any longer."

"Well, Governor, when you do it, I'll get up and dance a jig, wherever I am."

"I'm going to give a fireside chat in the next few days. I wrote my speech on the *Tuscaloosa*. Would you like to read it?"

"I'd be as proud as that dog with two tails I once told you about."

"You might have some suggestions. Take that chair over there and turn on the light beside it. Here's the script; you read it, and I'll go on with my work."

VIII

So Lanny Budd spent one of the happiest half-hours of his life. It seemed to him that he saw the towers of National Socialism crumbling and a new world of peace emerging—right there before his eyes. This was the fireside chat to end all chats; it was a bugle call to America and to the world. Lanny read:

"The Axis not merely admits but proclaims that there can be no ultimate peace between their philosophy of government and our philosophy of government. . . . There can be no appeasement with ruthlessness. There can be no reasoning with an incendiary bomb. We know now that a nation can have peace with the Nazis only at the price of total surrender. . . . The British people are conducting an active war against this unholy alliance. Our own future security is greatly dependent on the outcome of that fight. . . . Democracy's fight against world conquest is being greatly aided, and must be more greatly aided, by the rearmament of the United States and by sending every ounce and every ton of munitions and supplies that we can possibly spare to help the defenders who are in the front lines. . . . There will be no 'bottle-necks' in our determination to aid Great Britain. No dictator, no combination of dictators, will weaken that determination by threats of how they will construe that determination."

When the reading was over, the P.A. was in a glow; but he sat in silence until the Chief looked up from the documents he was signing. "Well, Lanny, how is it?"

"It's absolutely gorgeous. If you don't change your mind, Governor——"

"The time for changing minds is over; now it's time for action. Have you any suggestions?"

"I remember that early in the last war Sir Edward Grey spoke of America as 'the reserve arsenal of the Allies'—I think that was it. The circumstances are the same, and you might revive that phrase. How about saying: 'We must be the great arsenal of democracy'?"

The President thought for a moment. "That's a good sentence," he decided. "Find a place where it will fit and write it in." He went

back to the signing of documents, while Lanny went over the text again. When he had inserted his little sentence he was, quite literally, as happy as that unusual English dog.

IX

Lanny went back to New York by train, and two days later he received a notice that his passport was ready. He phoned to his father, who had undertaken to get him passage on a Clipper to Lisbon. These great flying boats were hard to get into now; their spaces were taken by British officers and bureaucrats of both nations. But Robbie phoned to Juan Trippe, president of Pan-American Airways; when one man is flying hundreds of planes and another is making hundreds, either is pleased to do the other a favour. Mr. Trippe said: "When does your son wish to go?" and Robbie said: "As soon as possible after Christmas." The other consulted his records and asked: "Shall we make it the last day of the year?" Robbie replied: "Thanks, I will mail you a cheque."

The old rascal might have obtained a date before Christmas if he had asked for it, but he wanted Lanny to spend the holiday with the family. Was he thinking about keeping him out of danger a few days longer? Or had he been talking to Esther, and been told that Peggy showed a lively interest in her cousin, and that if he stayed and attended holiday festivities, he might come to realize what a desirable young person she was? Lanny wondered if his father still had in mind "that German woman" who had been haunting Beauty's thoughts for many years. Beauty didn't know that Lanny had been married to this woman, or that the Nazis had killed her in one of their torture dungeons. Robbie might be thinking that Lanny was still tied up with her, and that if he could be got interested in the right sort of girl he might settle down in Newcastle or New York.

Anyhow, Lanny stayed since he had to, and he didn't worry too much, because it is pleasanter to oblige your friends than to affront them; he danced with Peggy Remsen because it would have been rude to evade her, and she came to lunch because Esther invited her when Lanny was there. The stepmother suggested that he take the girl for a drive through the lovely winter scenery of the Connecticut uplands, and Lanny obliged; he liked winter scenery himself. He told stories about the collecting of old masters, and about the political intrigues of old Europe—such details as were fit for a virgin's ears. When she asked if he did not think the Nazis were abominable people, he explained that there were various evil forces struggling for power in Europe, and sometimes it was hard to make a choice among them.

Meantime the dreadful bombing of Britain went on night after night. It was one city, then another, and the vast sprawling capital was seldom spared. The nights were long, and this was the time of death and destruction. One result was that telegrams and telephone calls besieged Robbie Budd, and visitors came from Washington and from overseas. They wanted planes, more planes, still more planes. They wanted Robbie to throw away caution and go ahead and expand, and when he tried to plead the interests of his stockholders they considered him a stubborn reactionary. What value would be left in the stocks of any American plant if Britain went down?

The military men of both countries kept Robbie up late at night painting pictures of the calamities they foresaw as the result of the swift development of air war. If Hitler got Britain, he would surely get Gibraltar, and then Dakar at the western bulge of Africa. They repeated their strategical question: what was to keep him from flying an army of paratroopers from there to the eastern bulge of Brazil? And when he had an airbase there, wouldn't he have all South America at his mercy? And what could we do about it? He could fly his bombers and destroy the Panama Canal, which would be the same as cutting America in halves; we should be two nations fighting two wars, one with Germany and one with Japan.

There was a limit to the stubbornness even of Robbie Budd. The governments had the power; the British and the American governments had become for all practical purposes one, with Churchill and Roosevelt talking over the telephone every night. They could commandeer Budd-Erling if they wanted to; or they could carry out their unveiled threats to build more new plants in the Middle West and hire all Robbie's experts away from him. All right, he would put up more buildings, and start a whole new schedule; but Washington must furnish every dollar, and must agree to take the plants back at cost after the war, if Robbie so desired. "After the war?" said the bureaucrats. "Christ! Who is thinking about after the war? Our job is not to be exterminated."

They were so scared that even Robbie got scared, and said to his son: "I suppose you'd better go over there and find out what Göring is up to." An extraordinary concession.

X

Lanny went to visit Hansi and Bess. He avoided politics but listened to their music, and played duets with his half-sister while Hansi was practising in another part of the house—something he did every day, regardless of other events. Then Lanny drove into New

York and got in touch with Jim Stotzmann. It was Sunday, the 29th of December, and they had dinner in an obscure place where nobody knew them, and then went out and sat in Lanny's car. Wearing warm overcoats and with a robe over their knees, they turned on the radio in the car to hear the scheduled fireside chat. Lanny didn't feel at liberty to say that he had already read it.

They listened with rapt attention to the warm friendly voice; and they noticed a curious phenomenon—passers-by on the street heard that voice and stopped. They stayed, regardless of a wintry wind and snow on the ground. Lanny didn't know who they were; he didn't turn to look at them, but lowered the window a crack for their benefit. More and more came and nobody went away. That was the sort of compliment the humble people paid to Franklin D. Roosevelt, all over the land; the plain people, of whom there were so many, whose names never got into the newspapers, but who discussed the country's problems among themselves, made up their minds, and managed sooner or later to let the politicians know what they wanted.

It was America burning her bridges behind her; America laying down the law that Nazi-Fascism wasn't going to be permitted to take control of the world. America was going to become the great arsenal of democracy. Lanny's phrase rang out, and his heart gave a jump when he heard it. He had promised to dance a jig, but the circumstances hardly permitted that. He and his friend patted each other on the back, and were so happy they had tears in their eyes. The impromptu audience faded away silently, as if they had been eavesdropping and were embarrassed. What they thought, Lanny would only learn in the course of years, when at the ballot box and at mass meetings and in other ways the people would register endorsement of their great President's policies.

XI

Lanny had taken Peggy Remsen to see the lovely scenery of the uplands of Connecticut in winter, and it would hardly be fair not to do the same for Laurel Creston. He discovered that he liked to tell Laurel about what had happened to him, and wished that he might be free to tell more. She enjoyed riding, and from the secure peace of New England they looked back upon perils in the land of the Hitlerites. They were veterans of a war, and could enjoy the delights of fighting their battles over again. Lanny was returning to the front, and Laurel might have liked to join him but had to stay and wage what she called her feeble little war of the pen. Lanny had to remind

her that the Nazis were skilled with the pen and never made the mistake of undervaluing it.

While F.D.R. had been giving his fireside chat, the Nazis had been carrying on another mass bombing of London. This time it had been with incendiaries; and while this happy couple enjoyed the winter scenery they turned on the radio and listened to details of the dreadful conflagration blazing in the very heart of the capital, the portion known as The City. Laurel had never visited it, but Lanny had known it from childhood, because Margy Petries's husband—Lord Eversham-Watson, shortened to "Bumbles"—had been a "City man," operating busily with his wife's fortune. Now Lanny told of the sights he had then seen and which no one would ever see again.

The district was small, and crowded like an ants' nest. Nobody knows why ants run their tunnels here and not there, but presumably it is because their forefathers of generations ago started that way; and just so with London City, which had enough secret doors and hidden passages to supply the writers of murder mysteries for the rest of time. In its tangle of buildings and cellars had been developed the most modern banking technique in the world, but that had changed few of its outward forms. It was a little empire inside the great empire on which the sun never set. The sovereign was the Lord Mayor of London, and he had his own police; the army of the King of England might never enter, and the King himself might enter only after an elaborate ceremony; he was represented by a sort of ambassador with the odd title of the King's Remembrancer. The odder a title was, the more the English people cherished it.

Lanny's visit had been on St. Michael's Day, because that was the day of the Lord Mayor's procession. It had been like a fairy story to see his civilian majesty riding in a golden carriage, escorted by lackeys in wigs, and the Aldermen with caps of black velvet, and the Sheriffs, and the drummers of the City Marshal, followed by the Marshal himself in violet velvet embroidered with silver. All the different Guilds had their costumes, designed more than six hundred years ago. Each had their jealously cherished privileges—for example, the Wine Merchants' Guild were the only persons, excepting the King, who were permitted to raise swans in England!

Alongside all this ancient frippery was the Bank of England, the most powerful in the world; the Stock Exchange, and the Royal Exchange, where all the currencies of the world were sold every business day; the Clearing House, a huge establishment; the Baltic, where ships were chartered for every port known; also, the five great chain banks which ruled the land's credit. In Lanny's Pink days he would have been willing to dispense with all this, but now he would mourn for it, because these great institutions had been financing the

war on Nazi-Fascism all over the earth. "Including Budd-Erling fighter planes?" suggested Laurel; and he answered: "Yes, but there weren't enough of them."

XII

Robbie's man came down from Newcastle to drive Lanny to the airport and bring the car home. Lanny's two bags and his little portable typewriter were put on board the giant flying boat, and Lanny made himself comfortable in a cushioned leather seat. When he glanced about him he observed a fellow-passenger, a slender gentleman in a rumpled grey suit; a gentleman partly bald and with a pale complexion and a worried expression suggestive of poor health. Lanny had never seen him before, but the newspapers had made his features familiar to all the world. It was the top New Dealer, the Lord High Chief Boondoggler and Grand Panjandrum of Leaf-raking, the especial pet peeve of Robbie Budd and the other economic royalists: the harness-maker's son from Iowa who had become F.D.R.'s *fidus Achates*, his Man Friday, his alter ego; the former social worker who was seeking to turn America into one gigantic poorhouse, an asylum for the lazy and incompetent—a perfectly run institution, whose floors were scrubbed every morning and whose menus were according to the latest discoveries of the dietitians. At any rate, that had been Robbie Budd's idea of the man, cherished over a period of eight or nine years, and Robbie had foamed like a soda-water siphon when anybody so much as spoke the name of Harry Hopkins.

"Harry the Hop," as his Chief called him, lost no time after taking his seat in the plane, but opened up a voluminous brief-case and started studying some documents. He did that through the whole trip, and Lanny didn't interrupt him. Lanny might have got attention if he had said: "I was with the President in his bedroom just after he came back from Warm Springs." But Lanny wasn't free to say that; he couldn't even say that he was the son of Budd-Erling and was going abroad on business for his father. He would have had to say: "I am an art expert and an ivory-tower dweller," and that wouldn't have interested America's hardest-worked errand-boy.

Lanny knew that Harry Hopkins was on his way to England, to help make good the promises which F.D. had just proclaimed in the most public manner possible. The documents in his brief-case contained the figures as to what America was prepared to do now and over the coming months; no doubt they would be put before Churchill and his aides and compared with their schedules of what they had to have. The P.A., who would have liked nothing better than to look

through those documents, consoled himself by imagining a scene that would happen some day after this grim struggle was over; he would meet the harness-maker's son in the White House bedroom, and F.D. would say: "Harry, this is my friend Lanny Budd, who has been one of my most useful agents since the days before Munich. Treat him with honour, because we couldn't have won the war without him!"

IO

His Faith Unfaithful

I

THE small city of Vichy was as crowded and uncomfortable as when Lanny Budd had left it, the only difference being that the broad valley of the Allier River had been blazing hot and now it was bitterly cold. The Germans took most of the fuel of France and most of the rolling stock, and the people suffered through an unusually severe winter. It seemed to Lanny that the only times he was comfortable in Vichy France were when he was walking briskly or was in one of the hotels which had been taken over as government offices.

He didn't want to be known as a secret agent, nor yet as the son of Budd-Erling Aircraft; he wanted to be a private party, earning his living by trading in art works; so he asked no help in finding accommodation, but wandered about among lodging-houses, and got a hall bedroom by the device of paying the *propriétaire* a hundred francs extra per night to move himself into his cellar. Lanny's papers were in order, and the travel permit which Laval had got for him was still good, even though the *fripou mongol* himself was in Paris, taken there by the Germans for his safety. Lanny wandered about and looked at the sights and bought the painting for old Mrs. Fotheringay and another for Mrs. Ford, and arranged to have them shipped. He could guess that his doings were being observed and that before long the observers would decide he was harmless.

Food was fairly plentiful, since the district was productive, and the Germans, trying to make friends, were not commandeering too much. Dining in the cafés, Lanny kept a lookout for familiar faces, and presently came upon a man whom he had known in Paris: a journalist-snob by the name of Jacques Benoist-Méchin, who fancied himself a man-about-town—which meant that he spent more money than he

could normally earn. Young and eager to rise, he had been one of Kurt Meissner's men in Paris, and had written a two-volume work about the Wehrmacht, so well done that the Nazis had had it translated into a number of languages. Subsequently he had been taken prisoner of war, but had been released and sent to Vichy because Otto Abetz could use him there.

Now, Lanny discovered, Benoist-Méchin had been taken into the government; quite an important post, but still he couldn't live on his salary. On the side, he considered himself an authority on antiques, and Lanny purchased a small painting from him, not haggling over the high price. So they became friends, and Lanny listened to a flood of gossip, freely poured out. He had been in many a hothouse of intrigue, but never anything to compare with half-frozen Vichy. The very impotence of the government, the impossibility of doing anything, made scheming and wire-pulling and whispering secrets the main occupations of men and women. Here were enough politicians and would-be statesmen and their wives and mistresses to have governed all Europe; but they had only the smaller and poorer half of France, and could only talk about doing things, because there were German commissions in almost every town and agents all over the place, watching, reporting, and countermanding orders when they saw fit.

It gave M. Benoist-Méchin the greatest of pleasures to tell his wealthy and generous American friend all about the quarrel between the Chief of the State and his Vice-President which had shaken the world a month ago. It appeared that Lanny's informant had unwittingly been the cause, for he had suggested to his chief that it would be a gracious gesture if the Führer were to send to Paris the mortal remains of Napoleon's unhappy son, known to the French as "*L'Aiglon*"—the eaglet—who had died a semi-prisoner in Austria. The remains had been put in a crypt in Paris with a stately ceremony, and Pétain had been invited to attend; but the old Marshal had learned, or thought he had learned, that this was a trap set by the treacherous Laval to get him in German hands and keep him there. Also, Pétain had got indubitable evidence that the *fripou* had been trying to employ units of the North African army in the interest of the Germans; so he called for the resignation of all his cabinet members, and then accepted only Laval's, and ordered him to prison.

There was melodrama for you! The blond, airy-mannered young Frenchman told with many gestures how Otto Abetz had got the news in Paris and exploded into a fury and sped to Vichy with a guard of his trusted SS men. He had ordered the instant release of Laval, but hadn't quite dared to depose Pétain; there had been several days of arguing and scolding, and Benoist-Méchin had been called into consultation, a circumstance of which he was very proud. Flandin, the

new Vice-President, had managed to convince Abetz that he was a man to be trusted, and so the Governor of Paris had taken Laval away, and Vichy had another lease on life, though nobody would guess for how long.

II

Who was this Admiral Leahy, who called himself a Catholic, and had been sent by the Protestant Roosevelt to undermine the political foundations of Catholic France? Was it true that Roosevelt was a Freemason, and that he was Jewish or had Jewish blood? Was it true that he was in the pay of Morgan and Morgenthau and the other Wall Street Jews? Such were the questions asked by a journalist who had been reading Nazi newspapers for a decade and helping to write them. Lanny had to say that it was difficult to be sure about such matters; however, it was true that opposition to Roosevelt's interventionist tactics was rising rapidly in America, and that from what he had heard he wouldn't be in the least surprised to pick up his morning paper and read that the President had shared the fate of Laval and been deposed.

The journalist was stirred by these tidings, and pressed Lanny to know how dependable they were. Lanny wasn't free to mention Harrison Dengue, but he felt free to tell about the Nazi agents, and about the nationalists and pacifists of Detroit and Chicago and Hollywood. Also he mentioned his visit to San Simeon, and this was received with special interest, because Jacques Benoist-Méchin had for some time been Mr. Hearst's private secretary—a fact which Lanny pretended he had not known. The Frenchman had been discharged rather suddenly, and for some reason didn't have much that was good to say about his former employer. A self-willed and violent man!

It happened just as Lanny had planned; M. Benoist-Méchin repeated Lanny's stories to his superiors, and one of them was Admiral Darlan, who promptly asked that the American be invited to call. When he asked: "Why didn't you come to me first?" Lanny replied: "I was afraid you would be too busy, *mon Amiral*." Said the blue-eyed and weather-beaten seadog: "I never let myself get too busy to see my friends." He brought out his bottle of brandy and warmed himself to the task of asking questions about public sentiment in America, and the chances of Vichy's getting any food and medical supplies; also about his former friends in Britain, and what significance was to be attached to the resignation of Lord Wickthorpe, and who else had been at the castle, and had anything been said as to the likelihood of the British government standing firm on the blockade of the Mediterranean ports of France?

There was at this time a clamour being raised by Herbert Hoover and others of his way of thinking, for America to send food to the needy in Europe. This pleased the Nazis and their friends, for the more food America would send, the more Hitler would be able to draw away for his own uses. He had vowed that everybody else in Europe would starve before any Germans starved; but of course he didn't want anybody to starve, because if they did they could no longer work to produce the goods he needed.

As to the question of the British blockade, Vichy France wanted to bring phosphates and wheat from her North African colonies and exchange them for German coal, so that the people of the towns wouldn't have to wear their overcoats in their homes and sit wrapped up in their bedclothes. Admiral Darlan was at this moment trying to make up his mind to send his Fleet to convoy merchant ships against the British blockaders, and he would have paid a handsome price to know what the British would do about it. From Lanny Budd he was hoping to get the information for nothing; but of course he couldn't get it without revealing what was in his own thoughts. That was why Lanny distributed information freely, and most of it correct, so that his questioners would want more next time. That was why he rarely sought anybody, but waited to be sought; why he rarely asked questions, but skirted around a subject and caused his interlocutor to bring it up.

By this technique a presidential agent learned that the statesmen and officials of Unoccupied France were a badly worried lot. They had surrendered their armies and the greater part of their land in the firm certainty that Britain was done for and would have to follow suit in a very short time. But seven months had passed and Britain was still holding out; and now the President of the United States had offered to throw the wealth of that vast country behind the British effort. A few days ago the President's official emissary, Admiral Leahy, had arrived and taken up his residence a few blocks from the Hotel du Parc, where the old Marshal now had both his office and home. Leahy went almost every day to see the Chief of State and poison his mind with propaganda. As a result, the old gentleman grew more stubborn and more disobliging to the Germans, who were trying so hard to be decent and to get what they wanted without having to take it. Admiral Darlan wanted to give it to them, because his hatred of the British had become implacable since the episode of Oran, or as the French called it, Mers-el-Khébir, where the British had attacked Darlan's Fleet and put several of his best units out of action.

Lanny didn't go near the Hotel du Parc and didn't seek to meet the old Marshal again. He had been told to keep away from Admiral

Leahy, and was glad to do it, for he had to send a secret report in care of this Irish-Catholic officer, and knew that he would be guessing as to the identity of the mysterious "Zaharoff." Let sleeping admirals lie! Lanny collected the information he wanted, and then, wrapping himself in his bedclothes and blowing frequently upon his fingers, he typed his report and saw it delivered by a messenger at the Admiral's residence. Then he went back to sleep in his warm tweed overcoat.

III

One of the significant aspects of the conquest of France was the economic squeeze which the Germans were applying to the country. A scientific-minded people, the Germans had experts in every field to tell them how to accomplish their purposes with the least pain and alarm to the victim. Their head financial wizard was Herr Doktor Hjalmar Horace Greeley Schacht, who shortly before the war broke out had applied to Robbie Budd in the hope that Robbie might help him get a job in America—so discouraged was he by the impending bankruptcy of his Fatherland. But the Herr Doktor was still on the Führer's job, and had devised the wondrous plan whereby the French were printing banknotes to the amount of four hundred million francs per day and turning them over to the Germans, supposedly for the upkeep of the German army of occupation; the Germans were using them to buy up the key industries of France, the steel mills, the munitions plants, the coal mines, the electrical and aluminum installations.

They had numerous commissions investigating and negotiating, and the Vichy Government had a commission in Paris to deal with them; whenever some member of this latter commission was stubborn and wouldn't do what the Germans wanted, they would have him removed and a more pliant tool appointed. This was like squeezing blood, not out of a stone, not out of a turnip, but out of a living creature, and the cries and struggles of the squeezed were pitiful. It was a part of Lanny's job to investigate these matters, and he went about in fashionable society hearing the gossip, and smiling secretly in his soul—for some of these refugees were the serene and masterful gentlemen whom he had met at the home of Schneider the armaments king. Lanny had heard them repeat the formula so popular with the "two hundred families" who ruled France: "Better Hitler than Blum!" Now they had their Hitler, and he was wringing the financial blood out of them.

Benoist-Méchin, knowing the German language well, was serving as a sort of liaison official with the Germans who came to Vichy. He knew them all, and called many his friends, and at Lanny's request he invited to lunch a certain Doktor Jaeckl, one of Schacht's leading

assistants. He was one of those shaven-headed bulky Prussians with necks like their well-stuffed sausages, and Lanny had met him at the home of Doktor Goebbels, and again at Heinrich Jung's. The Prussian remembered it, for who could forget an American who was known to be a personal friend of the Führer's?

He was a jovial pirate, and Lanny imparted information concerning London and New York and Washington, and explained the excruciating embarrassment under which he suffered because his father's plant had been practically commandeered by the Roosevelt conspirators and compelled to make planes for the British. Doktor Jaeckl said it was indeed a shocking thing, the disregard for property rights that was spreading over the world; it all came from Moscow, the centre of political and moral infection, and National Socialism offered humanity's only hope of immunization. Herr Benoist-Méchin could testify that the Germans were scrupulous in paying for everything they took; and Herr Benoist-Méchin spoke up promptly, like a perfect stooge. "*Ja, freilich!*"

IV

Towards the end of the *dejeuner à la fourchette* Lanny said: "I wonder if you know my old friend Kurt Meissner?" The Herr Doktor replied that of course he did; this great *Musiker* was one of the jewels in the Nazi crown. He didn't say anything about the services which Kurt had rendered as an agent of the *Generalstab*, in hiring men like Benoist-Méchin and preparing France for conquest. Lanny explained: "The last time I saw him was in Paris in June, when the Führer invited us to join him on his visit to the Invalides—you may remember that he went to inspect the tomb of Napoleon."

"I remember it very well, Herr Budd."

"I would like to get in touch with Kurt again. He goes to Stubendorf for the holidays, but it is about time he was back in Paris. I wonder if you can tell me the proper official to whom I should apply for permission to write him and let him know that I am here?"

"I shouldn't think there would be any trouble in arranging that, Herr Budd. The restrictions on mail across the border are a necessary military precaution, but they do not apply to persons such as yourself."

"What I want is to tell Kurt my address here, and that I have information which would be of importance to him. That is all I need to say, and the letter can be inspected by the proper official. You will understand that it is not a matter I should want to have generally discussed."

"*Selbstverständlich, mein Herr,*" said the Nazi, and added: "If

that is all you desire, I can help you to save delay. I am flying to Paris to-morrow, and will be glad to call Kurt Meissner and give him your message."

"Thank you ever so much, Herr Doktor. It will be a great favour. You will find him at the Crillon, I believe; and if he has not yet returned to Paris, you might be so kind as to leave a memo for him."

So it came about that, several days later, Lanny found a note at his lodging—Kurt had been there to look for him. Kurt was at one of the hotels, for of course there were always accommodations for an important Nazi. Half an hour later Lanny was in his room and they embraced with old-time warmth. Boyhood feelings are hard to eradicate from the heart, and even though Lanny despised what Kurt was doing, he couldn't entirely forget the happy old times at Stubendorf.

A man is what his heredity and environment have made him. Kurt had been brought up under the stern Prussian system; his father had been a trusted employee of a high-up nobleman, and Kurt and his brothers had been drilled and disciplined in the sternest army regime in the world. Kurt's first wife and child had been victims of World War I, and Kurt had learned to hate the French just as the French hated him. When, after the defeat, his superiors in the Wehrmacht had ordered him to use his knowledge of France and his skill as a musician to reverse the results of Versailles, Kurt had obeyed without question.

For seven years he had been Beauty Budd's lover and Lanny's friend and almost stepfather; he had lived at Bienvenu, and had used the Budd family's social connections as a means of getting introductions and information. After Hitler had come into power he was sent back to France to use these talents and opportunities in the service of Nazism. Now, in the days of triumph, he was still obeying orders, and feeling himself completely vindicated in his life's course. "*Hitler hat immer recht!*"

It had taken Lanny a long time to wake up to the meaning of these intricate and subtle deceptions, but in the end he had come to understand clearly that you couldn't be friends with a Nazi, a Nazi was the enemy of every non-Nazi in the world. Even if you, a non-German, adopted the hateful creed, you didn't really get anywhere, the true *Herrenvolk* would use you, but in their hearts they would despise you as a traitor to your own kind and a dupe of the Nazi *Weltbetrug*. The Nazis had chosen Loki, god of lies, for their Nordic deity, and all other peoples had to learn to live under his sceptre.

Lanny had heard long ago the German saying: "When you are with the wolves you must howl with them," and when he was in Naziland he howled in the most reserved and dignified manner. He made speeches about National-Socialist achievements and destiny which sounded to the Nazis almost inspired; and when he met Kurt he embraced him, and looked with utter devotion into those long and heavily lined features. He listened to Kurt's latest composition and sang its praise, he played four-hand piano compositions with an eminent virtuoso, and he poured out news about Britain and America, proclaiming how many Nazi sympathizers there were in those benighted lands, and how diligently he himself was working to spread an understanding of the great Führer and his benevolent intentions toward the world he was taking in charge.

VI

Kurt had flown from Paris because of his certainty that Lanny wouldn't bring him to Vichy for nothing. Alone in the hotel room over a dinner served at Wehrmacht expense Lanny gave first the human and personal news from Brienvu and Wickthorpe and Newcastle. Kurt hadn't quarrelled with Beauty when he had left her to marry a proper German *Mädchen*, and he always paid tribute to Beauty's kindness and generosity. He knew that Irma Barnes was a near-Fascist, and had no idea that it was this fact which had wrecked Lanny's marriage. Kurt knew Robbie Budd well and admired him: understanding Robbie's reactionary views, he was prepared to believe that Robbie was still among the Roosevelt-haters and diligently sabotaging Roosevelt efforts to force him into making fighter planes for the Royal Air Force. Had Kurt heard that the Budd-Erling had been found unsatisfactory by the British, and that their flyers refused to trust their lives to it? Yes, Kurt had heard that; it was Kurt's role to hear of everything—didn't he have at his disposal the most wonderful intelligence service in the world? Lanny could reveal just why Budd-Erling was behind and going to stay behind. That was good news indeed for the Luftwaffe, and worth a flight from Paris by one of the Wehrmacht's trusted agents.

But that was only a curtain raiser. This son of Budd-Erling, in the course of his picture-selling business—something that Kurt looked upon with concealed disdain—had been travelling all over the United States, talking with people of all classes, and had the most interesting account to give of the firmly rooted determination for peace which he had encountered everywhere, north, south, east, and west. Among influential and powerful persons there was rapidly spreading the con-

viction that Roosevelt was mentally irresponsible and must at all costs be prevented from carrying on his war-mongering campaign. Lanny told about the country-club conversations in Newcastle and Baltimore, and about the cowboy Rough Riders of Hollywood; also about the guests of San Simeon, and the things they had said on election night. He told about his intimate talks with Hearst, and didn't have to conform exactly to the facts; where the isolationist publisher had been reserved, Lanny could make him bold and defiant in voicing his admiration for the Fuhrer.

As for the "junta," Lanny wasn't free to name the rebellious persons, but that was unnecessary, for this was a story which Kurt would have no difficulty in believing. Had not Hitler's own followers made plans to depose him a year or so after he took power, and had he not been obliged to slaughter some twelve hundred of them in a dreadful blood purge? A Nazi secret agent wouldn't see any reason for expecting America to be free from similar convulsions, and would be sure that persons who thought otherwise were the crudest of dupes.

VII

Lanny had put up the price; and now, would he get what he wanted? As a rule he got less from Kurt than from others, for Kurt was naturally a reticent man, and years as a secret agent had taught him distrust of nearly everyone. But he was fond of Lanny, and thought of him as a pupil; though only a year and a half older, Kurt had always taken that attitude. When Lanny said: "I am worried sick over this war; it is going to be a long one, and that is surely not what the Führer wanted," the Wehrmacht man replied: "The Führer didn't want any war; but since it was forced upon him, be sure that he isn't going to fail. Our scientists have devised weapons that will knock the British off their pins."

"New weapons take a long time to get into production, Kurt."

"Don't worry; we are further along than anybody guesses. You can take my word that I have sources of information."

"I don't doubt that. What worries me is my own country going into mass production."

"It will be all over before America can do anything much. Your productive system is a chaos, everybody going his own way and seeking his own profit. And remember, the goods have to cross the sea. Our U-boats have new devices to operate in the dark, and this winter our blockade is more complete than the world has any idea of."

Lanny wouldn't ask questions about these crucial matters; he would keep quiet and let his friend expound so long as the spirit moved him.

In the old days Kurt had expounded the subtleties of Kantian metaphysics and the esoteric intricacies of Beethoven's later string quartets. Now his mind was on the maze of European diplomacy and the broad outlines of military strategy, the movements of armies and supplies, and the economic advantages to be gained in one place as compared to another. The young Kurt had been gravely concerned with moral questions, but now morals no longer had anything to do with the affairs of nations; what helped Germany was right, and what hindered her was wrong.

Whatever it was Kurt discussed, he always spoke with authority. At the age of thirteen Lanny had been enormously impressed by this manner, and by the long abstract German words he had never heard before. Now, at the age of forty, he pretended to have the same attitude; but he could never feel entirely certain about Kurt's attitude toward him. Could it be that Kurt saw through Lanny as clearly as Lanny saw through Kurt? Was their continued intimacy due to the fact that Kurt set a higher value on what he got from Lanny than on what he gave? Hitler had used Lanny as an errand-boy to take messages to the right people in Paris and London and New York, and no doubt he had taken precautions to check up and make sure that the messages were delivered properly. Kurt had no knowledge of anything else that Lanny had done, and as long as Hitler was satisfied with him, Kurt would of course play along.

Making things easier, Lanny inquired: "Do you suppose the Führer would want to see me these days?"

"Why not? He has always wanted to see you, when he wasn't too busy."

"I know he won't hold me responsible for Roosevelt's war-mongering, but it seems to me it would be hard for him to endure the sight of any American."

"I don't think he has any such feeling. The Führer's doctrine is for all mankind, and any man who accepts it is his friend. The next time I see him I will mention the matter."

Lanny said: "Thank you," and at the same time made note that Kurt didn't say: "You can write him a letter and I will mail it for you in Paris." Could it be that Kurt was slightly jealous of the favour his great hero had shown to Kurt's American disciple? So many things to wonder about!

Lanny went on: "Don't think that I am trying to thrust myself forward. You know I have never asked a favour of the Führer, and I am thinking only of the cause. More than once he has told me what he wants me to say about his policies and purposes; and some of those who question me are people of great influence, as you know."

"Yes, indeed, Lanny. You can say that neither his policies nor his purposes have changed."

"That doesn't satisfy them. They say: 'Yes, but it's been seven or eight months since you saw him, and a lot of water has flowed over the dam. What does he want *now*? What are his terms?'"

"He set them forth in his great speech last month, Lanny."

"I know; but people of importance never take it for granted that a statesman means exactly what he says. They want something confidential, something personal. I have said to them: 'This is what the Führer said to me with his own lips'; and that impresses them more than I can tell you. For example, Hearst; the thing he wanted to know more than any other was whether the Führer really meant to put down Bolshevism all over Europe. Just a few days ago one of the most important persons in our United States officialdom put the point-blank question to me: 'If we succeed in getting Britain off Hitler's back, can we count upon it that he will go after Stalin?'—or words to that effect. This is one of the men who may be helping to depose Roosevelt at any time. His decision to act or not to act might depend upon what I tell him when I go back."

This was fishing in deep waters. Kurt demanded: "What can such a person expect of the Führer, more definite than he has put into his speeches, of his utter loathing for the Reds and everything they stand for? But you must remember, we have a treaty of mutual non-aggression with Russia, and we have trade agreements also."

"My understanding is that you're not getting very much out of the trading."

"That is true, and we raise rows about it, but that is a different matter from going to war. Even if the Führer had such a purpose, his generals would hardly permit him to announce it in advance."

"Of course not, Kurt. But if he had the idea to whisper it to one discreet person, who would take it directly to one of the most influential men in London, and then to one or two in New York and Washington—that might be just enough to turn the scales in the struggles over policy now going on."

"What you say is truly important, Lanny," replied the *Komponist*. "I can't give the answer, but I'll see that the Führer has a chance to consider it."

VIII

These two cronies spent the rest of the day and evening together. Kurt had recently been in Stubendorf, where Lanny had spent half a dozen Christmases in his boyhood and youth. Kurt talked about his

family, to whom the American in happier times had always sent gifts; he was "Onkel Lanny" to the children. Kurt told about the General Graf Stubendorf, who had been host to Lanny and Irma; he had been badly hurt by an artillery shell and was home at the castle. And then Kurt's older brother, General Emil Meissner, also home for the holidays; he had come through the campaign of the Argonne with flying colours and had been promoted to command an army *Korps*. Emil, Lanny knew, had been studying mass slaughter from his days in the nursery, when he had wiped out a whole *Korps* with a sweep of his tiny hand; he still did it on sheets of paper with little oblongs which he drew with coloured crayons. He was considered one of the greatest authorities on logistics in the Wehrmacht, and he was known as one of the "Nazi Generals," since he shared Kurt's admiration for the greatest political genius the German race had ever produced.

Did the Führer's favourite musician, moved by all these family reminiscences, fail to realize what he was saying? Or had he thought it over and decided that Lanny was entitled to share a few of the Wehrmacht's secrets? Anyhow, Kurt told about discussions with his brother concerning the grave questions of strategy now up for decision. Kurt didn't say: "We are engaged in undermining the governments of Hungary, Rumania, and Yugoslavia, and soon we shall be able to move into those lands without serious fighting." He took this for granted, and talked about the next move, balancing various forces involved. Mussolini—"Dieser verdammte Esel"—had got himself into a mess in Greece, and of course the Führer would have to get him out. The question was, when you had Greece, where would you go from there?

Lanny said: "You could take Crete with paratroopers, and that would put you in a position to bomb the Suez Canal full of sand. At any rate, that is what the British are expecting."

"They may get it. The question is Turkey; how much she can resist, and how much she will."

"Usually with the Turks it's a question of money, Kurt."

"Unfortunately the British have more gold than we. The main problem with us is to reach oil; and we have to decide between Mesopotamia and the Caucasus."

This was after they had had dinner, and Kurt had absorbed the greater part of a litre of Burgundy. Lanny had never seen Kurt drink too much, but he had seen him become mellow and eloquent, and this was one of the times. It is always a pleasure to talk to somebody who knows almost as much about a subject as yourself, and can appreciate every nuance of your instructed disquisitions. When Lanny exclaimed: "But you can't go into Turkey with your left flank exposed to the Russians for a thousand miles!" Kurt knew that he was talking to

someone who had been looking at maps and at least hearing about the principles of the great Clausewitz.

"Don't worry too much," he answered. "I am quite sure that before this year is over you will see the Bolshevik menace eliminated from Europe."

This caused Lanny to look his friend straight in the eyes. "Listen, Kurt," he said earnestly. "I want you to get this exactly right. You know that I have never once asked you any question about confidential matters. That is true, is it not?"

"Yes, that is true."

"If you were to ask the Führer, he would tell you the same thing about me. I want to know only what he wants me to know, and what he is willing for me to pass on to others. Every time he has told me anything about his plans and purposes, he has said: 'Tell that to your friends abroad.' You have heard him say it."

"Yes, Lanny."

"All right. And make note of this: I didn't ask you anything about Russia. I wouldn't feel that, as your friend, I had a right to do so. But you have just told me something of great importance, and you haven't said: 'That is strictly between us.' What I want to make clear is, if I could say I *knew* that, if I could say I had it on the highest authority, I might be able to render a very great service to National Socialism. If I could say it to Caddy Wickthorpe, it might be the means of overthrowing the Churchill Cabinet."

"You think Wickthorpe has such power as that?"

"Surely not, but he is one of a group that has great power—how much is something they couldn't say until they try to use it. They know that life in England is horrible, and that the people cannot stand it much longer. What Caddy and his friends want is for Germany to fight Russia instead of Britain; they would be willing to help Germany in that, if necessary. Their political careers have been based upon such a programme; and in the days before the war, as you know, I carried messages to them for both the Führer and Rudi Hess. But now my information is out-of-date. I can't say that I know what the Führer intends to do, and on my last trip to London and New York I was handicapped by that fact."

"I see your point clearly enough."

"Once more I repeat, I'm not asking you to tell me. It may be that you haven't the right to do it, and if you say so, I'll understand. All I'm explaining is what I would do with the information if I had it. The men I am in contact with in Newcastle and New York and Washington and Detroit and Chicago are making the goods which are being shipped to Britain, and they might be able to stop the procedure if they could feel certain what the consequences would be. They want

the assurance that Germany will not use the breathing spell to go on arming against the West, but will carry out the programme which Hess has explained to me so many times: that Germany will make a real settlement with the British Empire, and be content with what she can find to the east of her—as far as she wants to go.”

IX

Kurt sat for a while in thought. It may well have been the weightiest decision he had ever been called upon to make. At last he said: “I understand your position, and I think you are right. I had a talk with the Führer in Berlin just before Christmas. I played for him a couple of hours in the New Chancellory. He did not state that what he told me was confidential, but of course he knew he didn’t have to say that. I am sure that if he were here now and heard your statement, he would tell you the facts. I am sure that Rudi knows them, and he would tell you. Anyhow, it could hardly do harm from the military point of view, because the Russians are so mistrustful of everybody that they never know what to believe. I have no doubt they get a dozen rumours every day as to the Führer’s intentions, and they wouldn’t pay much heed to reports from American sources.”

Tense as Lanny was, he permitted himself a smile. “How well you know them, Kurt!”

“Be sure that we get reports about them, also. But here is the point: the Führer told me that his mind was made up, we can no longer carry on a war while having that menace along our eastern border. He intends to eliminate it this spring, certainly not later than June, depending upon how quickly the Balkan affairs go.”

“It is a colossal undertaking, Kurt.”

“Our *Oberkommando* does not think so. Russia is a flat land, and we shall encounter none of the obstacles we found in the Ardennes and the Argonne. Our Panzer divisions will roll with speed that will astound you.”

“But the Soviets have many fortresses, have they not?”

“We shall by-pass them. We shall roll around their armies and slaughter them like flocks of sheep. We are confident that we can finish the job in six weeks; Emil thinks even less.”

“Well, Kurt, that is the most important secret I have ever been entrusted with, and I appreciate the honour you have done me.”

“You understand, Lanny, I cannot afford to be named as the source of it.”

“Oh, surely not! All I need to be able to say is that I have it on authority. The people I deal with are old friends, like Cuddy, and

they have had time to learn that I don't indulge in idle gossip. I will put the information to work as quickly as possible." Lanny didn't say any more than that, because he never lied unnecessarily.

The two friends parted with every expression of affection and trust; and Lanny went back to his unheated room, set up his little portable, wrapped himself in the blankets, blew on his chilled fingers, and wrote:

"Hitler has decided to attack Russia this spring, not later than June. This is positive, as of this date. He expects to finish the job in six weeks."

This he double-sealed in the usual way, always using a different kind of stationery. He addressed it to Admiral Leahy, and though it was late at night he found a messenger and stood in the shadows where he could see the letter delivered to the man who answered the bell. That was all for the moment, but before the P.A. left Vichy he took the precaution to write a second note and have it delivered in the same way. Perhaps the two would go in the same diplomatic pouch and by the same plane, but F.D.R. would understand and appreciate the care being taken.

X

The visiting art expert paid another call upon Admiral Darlan, and after making himself agreeable over the brandy, remarked: "*Mon Amiral*, I have a mother living in Juan-les-Pins whom I have not seen for a long time, and, as you know, travel is extremely difficult. I have the necessary permit, but it is a question of transportation, and it occurred to me to wonder whether your Marine might have a *camion* or other vehicle travelling to the coast on which I might stow away."

"*Sapristi!*" replied the old seadog. "We do not ship our friends as freight. We have planes flying every day, and sooner or later there will be a vacant seat. When do you wish to go?"

"The sooner the better, *mon Amiral*."

"*Bien*, I will see what can be done for you. Call my secretary in a couple of hours."

"One thing more," ventured Lanny. "As you know, my business is with paintings, and I have learned of a collection in Toulon which might be of interest to some of my American clients. Perhaps you may know the old gentleman, M. d'Avrienne." Lanny Budd had been collecting names and addresses of picture owners throughout France over a period of almost two decades, and he had a list always with him.

"I know him by reputation," replied Darlan.

The other hastened to add: "I am not seeking an introduction, only the *entrée* to the town. I know that in wartime a stranger does not just walk into a naval fortress."

"I will give you a letter to the commandant of the port," said the Admiral. "He will be interested in what you have to tell about both our friends and our enemies."

Yes, it was a pleasant world to live in if you had the good fortune to know the right people. It was a temptation to forget the existence of other people and enjoy the good things that were available. Lanny called the secretary and learned that he could have a seat in a plane flying to Marseilles the next day; so he bade farewell to his Vichy friends, telling them, strictly *entre nous*, that he believed things were going to be better soon. Since they could not well be worse, this was possible to believe.

XI

The Massif Central of France, barren and snow-covered, unrolled like a carpet below the traveller; and then the mountains and the fertile valleys with vineyards and olive groves of the Midi. By Lanny's side rode a naval lieutenant, and they chatted freely, so that when they came down in the great Marseilles airport they were friends. It developed that the young officer was proceeding to the Italian border on some official errand, and he was interested in this American gentleman who enjoyed the favour of an *amiral* and who spoke French so eloquently. Three other officers were travelling in the staff car, and it would be crowded, but they offered to squeeze Lanny in; a great favour at a time when *essence* was practically non-existent.

The guest made himself agreeable to such good effect that when they came to Cannes and learned that his home was on the Cap, they volunteered to make a slight detour. There was a tumult of welcome from the dogs, and Baby Marcel toddled out, shouting. The *officiers de marine* perceived that this was an elegant place, and when Lanny invited them in to have coffee they reasoned that it would be too late to transact any business that day, so why not?

In the well-shaded drawing-room Beauty Budd was still the most charming of hostesses; her wrinkles showed only in bright sunlight, and she never let strange gentlemen catch her there if she could help it. When she learned that they had brought her darling son all the way from Vichy she put herself out to make them feel at home; when they learned that she was the former Madame Budd of the famous Budd-Erling Aircraft and knew many distinguished persons of French social and political life, they exhibited pleasure to such effect that they

were urged to stay for dinner. "*Pas de gêne*," insisted Madame; most of their food was now grown on the place, a wise precaution in wartime; the only trouble was the impossibility of getting about, so when you had company in the house you wanted to make the most of them.

There was the very kind old gentleman with snow-white hair and rosy cheeks who was Madame Budd's present husband. All Frenchmen understood that American ladies changed their husbands frequently, and they found the circumstance novel and amusing. It did not interfere with their enjoyment of a good onion soup with *croutons*, and then of a large fish called *mérou* which had come that morning out of the Golfe Juan and had been stuffed with breadcrumbs and chestnuts and slices of bacon, and baked in an oven. Yes, people know how to live on the Côte d'Azur, and there were fashion and gaiety even in the midst of war. Madame Budd told how she had had to jack her two motor cars up off the wheels, but from an old barn she had resurrected an almost-forgotten buggy and had it scrubbed and painted and the wheels greased, and now could drive herself magnificently into Cannes behind a proper middle-aged horse which she had purchased from one of the flower growers on the Cap.

XII

So Lanny was home again, amid the scenes of his childhood so dear to his heart. Here everybody knew him and loved him, here nature held out soft warm arms to him, and art invited him in the aspect of a marble Greek goddess in the court. In his study was a library, and every time he looked at the titles he was tempted to take down a book and lose himself in its pages. There were a piano and several cabinets full of music; there was the ever-fascinating subject of child study, and also the seeming-infinite field of psychic research, which drew Lanny Budd as the New World had drawn Columbus. Madame Zyszynski was waiting to try experiments with him, and indeed would have her feelings hurt if he neglected this duty. Hidden in the subconscious mind of the old Polish woman were forces which tantalized Lanny with their mystery; from her lips in trance had come words which had brought to him the feelings of that watcher of the skies in Keats's sonnet—when a new planet sweeps into his ken.

They rarely mentioned the subject of politics in the family; it had become too cruel and wicked in these times. Lanny talked about old masters, and left it to be supposed that they were his reason for travelling about over the Western World. Parsifal Dingle rested in the certainty that his duty was to set an example of loving kindness, in the

certainty that men could not resist its divine force. Lanny would have liked to ask how love could make progress when all the forces of several mighty states were concentrated upon the teaching of hatred to a whole generation of childhood and youth; but that would have been a painful question, and Lanny suspected that his stepfather deliberately closed his mind to it. God was wiser than men, and God left it for men to make whatever blunders they pleased, and to learn by the hard way they seemed to prefer. In Lanny's mind was the question which no philosopher had thus far succeeded in answering. Why had God chosen to make them like that?

Lanny had to tell his mother about all the places he had been and all the people he had met, and what they were doing and what they had said. If he had failed to look up any old friend she would make gentle complaint, and when he had told her everything he could think of she would ask for more. Here she was, to all practical purposes a prisoner, cut off from communication with the outside world, and that Lanny had been able to travel to London and then to New York and back again was simply a miracle. All he could say was: "Well, you know Robbie generally manages to get what he wants; and his very survival in the business world depends upon his knowing what is going to happen in this war."

"And what is going to happen, Lanny?"

It was a question she had asked him on his last visit, and he gave her the answer again. "It will be a long war, old dear, and you might as well make up your mind to it."

Beauty paled, even under the *rouge vinaigre* which she skilfully applied. "As long as the last one, Lanny?"

"Certainly that long, perhaps longer."

"Oh, Lanny, I can't stand it! I shall die of the horror!"

"That won't shorten the war any. Make up your mind that you didn't start it and you can't stop it. Cultivate the ancient art of surviving." He couldn't say more than that, for she had too many friends here and they were all full of curiosity about Lanny and his doings.

XIII

Parsifal Dingle had a stack of psychic records for his stepson to examine. He rarely missed a day without a séance, and he had a mass of data concerning the monastery of Dodanduwa in Ceylon. He was firmly convinced that the voices he heard from Madame's lips were those of monks dead more than a hundred years, and he was fascinated by the idea of tracing the evolution of certain doctrines of this religion,

more than five thousand years old. It was no longer possible to communicate with the living monks, but Parsifal declared that as soon as the war was over he intended to visit the place and check his findings. He had quite a library of books on New Thought and what was now called "parapsychology." Lanny, rummaging among these books and pamphlets, came upon one dealing with the Upanishads, and containing many of the doctrines in question. Parsifal declared that he hadn't read this book, and there could be no doubt that he was sincere; but Lanny speculated upon the possibility that he might have read and forgotten it, and it had stayed and worked in his subconscious mind.

Even if you supposed that, you had not solved the problem, for the words had been spoken, not by Parsifal but by Madame Zyszynski, and surely Parsifal had never expounded these doctrines to this former servant, and if he had, she wouldn't have had the remotest idea what he was talking about. Here was Lanny again, fooling with "that old telepathy"; the idea that the subconscious mind was in some way one mind, just as the ocean is one ocean. It was his favourite simile.

Lanny took the feeble old woman off to his study and seated her in the easy chair which she knew so well and which may have had some effect upon her mind, or minds. And here came Tecumseh, grumbling at a sceptical playboy as he had done for more than a decade. Presently he announced that there was the spirit of an old lady named Mary who insisted that she had met Lanny in New York; but Lanny couldn't recall her, and was bored. Then came the quavering voice of Zaharoff, greatly distressed because Lanny hadn't even tried to pay the munitions king's debt in Monte Carlo, and refusing to be satisfied with Lanny's excuses that he didn't have the money, and anyhow, nobody could get to Monte Carlo at present, it was surrounded by the Italian army, and an American would have to get permission from Washington as well as Rome. Hadn't Zaharoff heard about the war? The Knight Commander said of course he had; and then he added something that made Lanny shiver to the soles of his feet: "What do you mean by using my name the way you have been doing?"

There was only one person in the world besides Lanny who was supposed to know that Lanny was using the name of Zaharoff. That was Lanny's Boss, and he was too busy to be fooling with trance mediums or talking with spooks. But here was the former Knight Commander of the Bath and Grand Officier de la Légion d'Honneur fussing about it, and saying that his relatives on earth would sue Lanny for libel if they knew about it—and maybe he would tell them! This was something for a P.A. to think over for a long time—and to worry over. He decided that he would be careful about whom he allowed to attend séances with Madame, or for that matter with any medium!

XIV

Lanny had told his two friends of the underground, Monck in Switzerland and Palma in France, approximately when he might return to Bienvenu and be expecting a letter. He wasn't sure about letters from Switzerland to Occupied France, but presumably the underground would have ways of dealing with such a problem. However, Lanny had found no letter from either man, and he didn't like to go off on another jaunt without giving them time. It was a reason for yielding to temptation and doing what he pleased for a while. He felt very proud over what he had accomplished with Kurt, and told himself that it entitled him to a rest.

He could picture what would happen when F.D. got that note; he would instruct Sumner Welles to warn Oumansky, and that lively and genial but decidedly sceptical Soviet Ambassador would no doubt pass it on to Stalin, his personal friend. From Hitler to Kurt to F.D. to Welles to Oumansky to Stalin—that made it sixth-hand information, and no doubt it would lose most of its urgency in the journey. The P.A. could only say: "I did my best."

He read and played the piano and consulted the "spooks." Driving his mother's nag, he paid a duty call upon his near-fostermother, Emily Chattersworth. With Beauty he dined at the villa of Sophie and her husband and played a rubber of contract. He played tennis and went fishing with his old crony, Jerry Pendleton. He danced with his tiny nephew, whose mother was dancing in Berlin and couldn't visit or even write. No doubt she, like all others in Hitlerland, had been shocked by the length of the war, so contrary to promises. Lanny had to tell his mother that Berlin had been bombed by the British; not much as yet, but more was coming, because America was making big planes—the best for British purposes, since they could fly the ocean and the subs couldn't get at them.

There was domestic mail inside Vichy France, but irregular and uncertain. At last came a letter, one of that inconspicuous kind which meant so much to a secret agent. It was from Toulon, and informed M. Budd, in French, that the writer had come upon a small but very good collection of Daumier drawings which might be purchased for something like fifty thousand francs. The writer, who signed himself Bruges, said that he was employed in Armand Mercier's bookstore in Toulon, and would be happy to show the drawings at any time. Daumier being an artist of the people, a satirist of the privileged classes of his time, would have understood and loved Raoul Palma's underground friends. The sum named, worth about five hundred dollars at the moment, represented the funds Raoul wanted Lanny to bring.

So the secret agent knew that his holiday was at an end. He

borrowed his mother's conveyance and drove into Cannes and drew the money from the bank; then he purchased various presents for friends and servants, as a means of getting small denomination bills. Having all his pockets stuffed with money, he went to see Jerry Pendleton at the latter's travel bureau. Lanny explained that he could buy some fine Daumier drawings in Toulon, if only he could find a way to get there. Jerry grinned and replied: "I know a nice polite pirate who will take you, and he'll agree to the price in my presence, so that he won't dare ask more than twice the amount. *C'est la guerre!*"

I I

Defend Me from My Friends

I

JERRY'S "pirate" showed up at eight o'clock in the morning with a reasonably efficient car, a tank full of *essence*, and three twenty-litre cans in the rear compartment, to complete a round trip of some two hundred miles. How he had got this he didn't say, and it would have been bad form to ask. Lanny was to have two full days in Toulon, according to the bargain, and if he stayed longer was to pay five hundred francs per day. He was to be limited to a hundred kilometres for driving about town, otherwise there wouldn't be enough fuel to bring them home. Étienne, the driver, would probably try to add other charges, Jerry warned; and Lanny said he would pay them if they were not too extreme, for he might want to take more trips in the future.

This one was without incident. Étienne was a discharged soldier and had adventures to tell. He understood that an American gentleman had nothing to do but enjoy life and did not bother himself with politics. Étienne had brought along a supply of cognac, which Lanny might have enjoyed for a price, but he didn't want any, and requested the driver to keep it corked. Also, Étienne knew a very nice girl who lived on the route, but Lanny said he had an important engagement with the commandant of the port; he didn't say anything about having his pockets stuffed with banknotes of all sizes.

Toulon is the naval base and arsenal of Mediterranean France. It is surrounded by high hills, like nearly all that shore, and every hill is fortified. Below lies a deep harbour with immense breakwaters and moles, and four great basins, called *darses*, in which lay long

grey-painted battleships and cruisers and, tied up against the piers, several rows of destroyers and smaller warcraft, many of them *déclassés*. It wouldn't do to manifest too great interest in this fleet, or to ask questions; but Étienne pointed out the *Dunquerque* and the *Strasbourg*, two battleships which had got away from the British at Mers-el-Khébir. He cursed the treacherous friends who had committed that act, and the passenger made no comment.

There was a commercial harbour, and a town of some hundred thousand population, now swelled by refugees; the British blockade having cut off most of the traffic, people were having a hard time to get along. Everywhere were sailors, wearing little round caps with bright red pompons on top. Lanny went to the Grand Hotel and was told that it was crowded; he asked to see the manager and exhibited his credentials from Admiral Darlan, whereupon a room was found for him. Losing no time, he telephoned to the office of the commandant, and was received with all courtesy by a dapper old gentleman—the heads of the French Army and Navy were invariably elderly, and while they were well trained in the technicalities of their jobs they were nearly always stiffly conservative, and hadn't had a new idea since the days of the Dreyfus case.

Yes, this commandant knew the d'Avrienne family well, and was familiar with their collection of paintings, one of the cultural monuments of the city. He had no doubt that they would be pleased to have an American *connoisseur* inspect them; the officer wrote a note of introduction, and had one of his aides make out a *carte d'identification*, which would spare him formalities with the police and port authorities. Lanny went back to his hotel and telephoned to the mansion, which lay in a sheltered valley behind one of the hills of the suburbs. He was told that the master was ill, but that the paintings would be shown to him in the morning—it would be better to view them by daylight. Since the visitor didn't care to wander about a harbour town at night with all that money, he stayed in his room, wearing his overcoat in bed and reading *War and Peace*. Étienne had put his car in a garage and was sleeping in it, for fear that somebody might pour off the precious *essence* and fill the cans with something cheaper.

II

In the morning a middle-aged daughter of this ship-owning family showed M. Budd the paintings, a rather commonplace collection, mostly family portraits. Lanny admired them, as courtesy required, and made his usual tactful inquiry as to whether any of them might be for sale. Then he was driven back to town, went for a stroll, and

without saying anything to anybody found the second-hand bookshop of Armand Mercier. He went in and took a quick look, but didn't see Raoul Palma. He began looking at the books, a practice which takes much longer in France than it usually does in America; you can stand and get yourself an education dipping into one old book after another, just as you can sit in a café and read a whole newspaper while you sip one cup of coffee.

There was a woman clerk, and Lanny stole glances at her. Was this a left-wing place, and were the proprietors in touch with the underground? The books were of all kinds, and the few that dealt with politics had no special character; but that meant nothing, for if a man had a stock of anti-Nazi or anti-Fascist literature, he surely wouldn't keep it in plain sight in days like these. Lanny wandered here and there, running his eyes over the shelves, and when the woman asked politely if there was any special thing he wanted, he replied that he was just browsing. What he was doing was making sure there was nobody else in the little shop. He couldn't say: "Is Raoul Palma here?"—because it might be that Raoul was going under an assumed name and that the woman did not share his secret. Certainly she must not share Lanny Budd's!

He couldn't stay forever, so he bought a paper-backed copy of *Le Lys Rouge* by Anatole France, which Beauty had read aloud to him when he was a boy, she having been an unusually frank mother, who made insufficient allowance for the difference between childhood and maturity. With the volume in an overcoat pocket—on top of a wad of money—Lanny strolled and looked at the very old city of Toulon. Like most of them along this shore, it had been conquered by Romans and Goths and Burgundians and Franks and Saracens. Here Napoleon had first made his name known by driving out the British. This he had done in the name of the republic which he destroyed a few years later; it was a melancholy story, not so different from the one that Adolf Hitler was now unfolding. Sad old Europe with her bloody soil, and her patient, toiling peoples who learned so slowly!

Lanny thought: Raoul's hours of work may be in the evening. So after dinner he went back, and the little shop was open, with a man in charge, but it wasn't the former school director. Lanny browsed again for a while, to make certain; then he bought another novel and went back to his hotel room and read. Very annoying, but there was nothing he could do but wait. Perhaps Raoul was ill; or perhaps the proprietor had sent him on some errand; or perhaps his hours were in the morning.

Early next morning the P.A. went again, and there was the same woman on duty. He looked at more books; he was pretty familiar

with the contents of the shop by now, and there were many he would have been interested to read, but not standing up, and watching out for Raoul, also for pickpockets. He asked for books on art and on psychic research which he could be fairly sure the woman wouldn't have; so he struck up an acquaintance. He learned that the store had been here for some twenty years, and that rising prices were good for the trade as long as you had any books left; also that in wartime people read a great deal because they couldn't have the other amusements they were used to. But he didn't hear anything about another clerk, or any message for an American customer.

So passed the day. Lanny went to dinner in the hotel dining-room, and made up his mind that as soon as he finished he would return to the store, and whether it was the woman or the man on duty he would remark: "By the way, I was in here some time ago and was waited on by a man—I took him to be a Spaniard—a man somewhat younger than myself." Lanny would make it sound right by adding: "I asked him about a book by Professor Osty, and he promised to try to find me a copy." This could involve Raoul in no worse offence than having overlooked a duty. He might lose his job for it, but that wouldn't be so bad as losing all the money which was squeezing Lanny's elegant tweed clothing out of shape!

III

But Lanny never returned to that bookstore. In the lobby of the hotel he met a lady.

She was sitting in one of the large, overstuffed, velvet-covered chairs, just where he had to emerge from the dining-room, and when she saw him coming, she rose and stood, obviously waiting for him. So he had a good look at her, and did not find it difficult. She was young—in her mid-twenties, he would have guessed. She was tall for a Frenchwoman, slender, a brunette with very lovely dark eyes and features sensitive and refined. She was simply dressed in a tailored tweed costume, and wore a little beret of the same material. Very much the lady, he would have judged, but nothing showy, no jewels, and if there was make-up it was not conspicuous.

She came towards him and inquired: "M. Budd, I believe?" Lanny said: "Yes."

"M. Budd, I am secretary to Madame Latour, of an old family of this town, and friends of the d'Avriennes. They have told us of your visit, and that you are interested in old paintings."

"That is true, Mademoiselle."

"Those of the d'Avriennes would be difficult to purchase; but

Madame Latour has sent me to tell you that she has a collection, not so large but more choice, and she would like very much to have you view it."

"I am interested, Mademoiselle. Who are the painters?"

"For one, there is a very fine Antoine le Nain."

"Indeed? Those are not so common. Are you certain it is genuine?"

"It has been viewed by many persons who understand art matters, and I have never heard of any question being raised."

"Well, that interests me greatly, Mademoiselle." Lanny didn't add that the mademoiselle interested him also; she had an unusually pleasing voice, a winning smile, a *tout ensemble* of desirability. He hadn't enjoyed the society of ladies for quite a while, except the elderly ones of his mothers' set. The ladies of Vichy had impressed him as harassed and shrill; but here, apparently, was one who had not been touched by the furies of war and conquest. "When may I view these pictures?" he inquired.

"At any time convenient to you. This evening, if you wish."

"Unless the lighting is good——" he started to suggest.

"You will find the lighting adequate, I am sure."

"And where is the place?"

"It is a few miles out of town, but an easy drive. I have Madame's car, and will be happy to take you and bring you back."

"That is very kind. I am happy to accept."

Really, as a man of the world, schooled in all the rascalities of Europe Lanny ought to have stopped to reflect for a few moments, and perhaps to make some inquiry, say of the hotel porter or clerk. There was a great scarcity of men in France, and the women were ravenous and would stop at no device. While there was no superfluity of money, it was very badly distributed, and those who lacked it were ravenous too. To go travelling with a strange lady at night, and with his pockets stuffed with money, was surely no procedure for a wise and cautious secret agent! But this lady was so exceptional, her manner so refined, her expression gentle and sweet, like the kindest of those endlessly multiplied madonnas an art expert had been viewing all over this old Continent. He forgot what had long been one of his maxims, that a spy is chosen because he or she looks as little like a spy as possible.

IV

He accompanied her to the car which was parked near by. It was a small car, and she herself was driving, a circumstance which surprised him, because in France women do not drive as freely as men, and

certainly the secretary of a *grande dame* should have been brought by a chauffeur. However, he couldn't very well say: "Are you sure you know how to drive, Mademoiselle?" She was businesslike and efficient, and he got in, pulled a robe over his knees, and let himself be carried along the *route nationale*.

"M. Budd," said the lady, "what is going to become of our unhappy France?"

It was a subject Lanny was surely not going to discuss—not for an *amiral* or a *maréchal*, nor yet for the most charming secretary-chauffeur. "*Chère Mademoiselle*," he replied, "to answer that would take a learned statesman or sociologist. It can surely be no question for a mere *connoisseur d'art*."

"We French," persisted the lady, "have the idea that you Americans are the wisest and most capable people in the world."

"*Hélas*, if there was anyone in my country who was able to foresee the calamities which have befallen Europe, I did not happen to meet him. We are successful at inventing machines, but less so at creating kindness and mercy in the world."

"My employers and all their friends are haunted by the idea that some day the hordes from Russia are going to sweep over Western Europe."

"A political lady!" thought Lanny, and he surely wasn't going to take any line until he knew her. "Many people think that," he remarked, "but such events seem to me a long way off, and one so young and charming as yourself would be wiser to enjoy the gifts which nature has showered upon her so liberally."

"*Merci, Monsieur*—you talk just like a Frenchman!" She flashed him a smile which he couldn't see in the darkness but which he could hear in her voice.

"I have lived most of my life in France," he replied. "So it has become second nature. Tell me about yourself, Mademoiselle."

She told him that her name was Marie Jeanne Richard, and that her father had been a professor in one of the near-by colleges, where she herself had studied. She had become engaged to a fellow-student who had been taken by the army and now was missing, presumably dead but possibly a prisoner of war. "It has been especially tragic to me," she said, "because I am one of those who had no heart in this war. I have been brought up to admire German culture, and to believe that friendship between Germany and France is vital to the future of both."

"It is too bad that all the nations cannot be friends," replied the cautious American. "In Europe they have acquired the bad habit of distrusting one another."

They had turned off the coast highway and were following one of

the small valleys between the mountains. The lights of the car swung here and there, revealing great forests of cork oaks, and as they ascended, of pines. It seemed to Lanny that they were going a considerable distance from Toulon. The paved road came to an end, and the car bumped as it rolled on. Of course there might be some estate up here—the rich have their whims, in France as in America; but Lanny became uneasy and said: "Are you sure you are on the right road, Mademoiselle?"

"Oh, yes," she replied, "I travel it frequently. It is not much farther now."

The road had become a mere track, and the ruts were deeper. It was more like a wood-road than the entrance to a rich property. When they came to a mountain stream and had to drive through the water, Lanny said with some firmness: "If I had known it was such a journey, Mlle. Richard, I would not have consented to come at night."

"It is quite near now," she assured him; "just around this side of the mountain. You will find it an exceptionally beautiful place. Madame Latour is a nature lover and something of a recluse. People come for hundreds of miles to enjoy the view from her lookout tower; but she herself is no longer able to go there, on account of her advanced years. The moon will be up in an hour or so and you will be able to see something of the immense vistas." That sounded like a proper sort of millionaire eccentric. The more money they have, the more people try to get it away from them, and the less trust they have in the human race. Lanny knew the phenomenon well.

V

The P.A.'s personal interest in this lovely young secretary had begun to wane since she had revealed herself as among the appeasers, a *collaboratrice*; he decided that he had been neglecting his business, and began to ask questions about the paintings he was to view. The car rolled around a shoulder of the mountain, and from behind a clump of underbrush four men stepped out onto the road, men with black handkerchiefs over their faces and guns in their hands. "*Halte-là!*" they cried, and levelled the guns. There was a squealing of the car brakes, and a gasp from Marie Jeanne Richard. "*Oh, mon Dieu! Des bandits!*"

Lanny's heart gave a mighty thump, but his head still kept working, and he remembered a maxim his father had taught him early in life: "Never forget that your life is worth more to you than all the money you can carry on your person or keep in your house." He was stuffed

with money like a goose with fat; but, it was only five hundred dollars, and he had earned ten times that in a single picture deal. So when the leader of the band said "*Haut les mains!*" he obeyed, and so did his companion. ("Stick 'em up!" was the American translation.) When the man said: "*Sortez!*" he clamoured out, and so did his companion.

One of the men proceeded to search Lanny; and a surprising thing happened. He didn't put his hands into a single pocket, but patted all the pockets of the overcoat and then of the coat and trousers, and felt around Lanny's waist and under his armpits; he wasn't looking for money but for arms! When he had made sure, he said: "*Rien.*" and the leader gave the order to tie Lanny's hands. They had a coil of rope, long, and very strong, as the victim was to make sure before this adventure was over. The man tied it tightly about one wrist and then drew Lanny's two hands behind his back, crossed the wrists, and bound them together and made them fast; the rest of the rope was for leading. Evidently the man who did the job was familiar with it. For he worked methodically, quickly, and without a word. When he was through the result was painful to Lanny, but thoroughly satisfactory from the point of view of the others.

They searched the woman, politely and not very completely, Lanny thought. They searched the car for arms, and then one of the men turned it around—they had picked a spot where there was room for the purpose. "*Entrez,*" said the leader, addressing the woman, and opened the car door for her. "We are through with you," he said. "Go home and stay there, and don't say one word to anybody about what you have seen. We are the avengers, and our punishment is swift and sure. If you betray us, we will kidnap you and bring you up here and roast you over a slow fire. We will do the same to every member of your family. *Comprenez-vous?*"

"*Oui, oui,*" was the reply, in a terrified voice, barely audible.

"*Partez,*" said the man, and the car rolled slowly down the wet and slippery track.

Lanny Budd's mind was working as hard as it knew how, for he realized that he was in serious danger. This was no question of losing fifty thousand francs; this might be a question of his life. The affair must be political, and the best guess he could make was that these were men of the underground, the movement which he had been secretly helping to build. He had not been impressed by the little drama which had been played with the woman; he took it that she was an accomplice of the band. She was one of those stern idealists who were springing up all over Europe, wherever the Panzer machine had rolled: people who would not give up their own freedom or that of their native land, people who would fight, and rouse others to fight.

and keep the torch of liberty burning. Lanny had come upon another Trudi Schultz, the anti-Nazi heroine whom he had secretly married, and whom the Nazis had murdered in one of their torture camps.

The captive realized this in flashes, but he had no time to dwell on it. He realized that he was in a plight, and might have a hard time thinking and talking his way out of it. An odd quirk of fate, that this danger should come from his own crowd, the people he had been serving, openly or secretly, for a quarter of a century. His knowledge of their ways and their states of mind enabled him to realize the truly frightening nature of his situation. These people were outlaws with a price upon their heads; their lives were grim, and they had no time to waste on formalities. When they seized a wealthy and prominent foreigner, it was because they believed him to be among the most dangerous of their enemies; and having got him, they would hardly turn him loose and let him go out and reveal their secrets. "Dead men tell no tales" is a maxim known to every boy who has ever read a story of pirates, bandits, or gangsters; and all over Europe men of both sides were returning to these desperate moods.

A sudden realization swept over the son of Budd-Erling: how careless and naïve he had been! He had taken every precaution as regards the Nazi-Fascists, but he had seldom taken time to reflect how he must appear to his own friends. The idea was a painful one and he had put it out of his mind. He had gone wandering over Europe, torn by war and civil war—he bland and innocent, a child in a jungle inhabited by fierce beasts. He had not seen the looks of glowering hate, nor heard the half-repressed snarls. He had taken it for granted that everybody thought as highly of him as he thought of himself. That, alas, is something that does not happen very often in this world.

VI

With the utmost politeness he addressed the leader of the band. "Would you mind telling me what this is all about?"—" *qu'est-ce que c'est que tout cela?* " is the odd formula of the French: "what is it that it is that all that?"

"What is it that your name is?" was the counter-question.

"Lanny Budd," he replied; he could hardly expect to conceal that.

"*Bien*," said the man. "We will tell you everything when we are ready. *Allons*."

He led the way and Lanny followed. The rope which bound his wrists had been left long and served to keep him from trying to run away or to throw himself over a precipice. A stout fellow came behind, holding it, and the two others followed with the guns. The

leader had a staff in one hand and a flashlight in the other; Lanny could see fairly well by the light, but the man behind him couldn't see so well, and every time he stumbled or delayed there was a painful jerk at the prisoner's wrists. They followed a well-trodden path, climbing through a high pass, and when they got to the top of the grade there was a freezing wind blowing. They came down along the side of a deep gorge with the sound of rushing water below. Then began another climb, and it was fortunate that Lanny had been playing some tennis and was not too soft. The penalty of lagging was what might be politely described as a push with the fist of the man behind him.

Over a saddle of mountain, by a path that hardly existed at all. There were traces of light below, and after they had descended and forced their way through a heavy thicket they came upon a tiny glade in a pine forest. There was a small campfire glowing, and two men sitting by it. The leader had already exchanged calls with them, and now the party of five came into the light. There was a log on each side of the fire, and the leader commanded his captive: "*Asseyez-vous.*"

Lanny's hands had been chilled in the high passes, and now they felt strangely numb. He said: "I am afraid my hands may be frozen." The other commanded that he be untied, and the burly fellow who had charge of the job obeyed without a word. He tied the rope around one of Lanny's ankles, and sat holding onto it, taking no chances. By the shape and colour of this man's hands Lanny took him to be a peasant. Sitting on the log and gently chafing his hands and wrists, the prisoner had a good chance to study them all. Two he decided must be dockworkers or shipbuilders, men of muscle with hands calloused and scarred. The rest were more probably intellectuals or white-collar workers; one had a strong Ligurian accent, familiar to a resident of the Cap d'Antibes since childhood.

The leader was a soft-voiced but firm-willed man of thirty or so, and there was something haunting about his voice. Lanny couldn't get away from the idea that he had heard it before, but it must have been a long time ago, he decided. Lanny had been sociable, and must have met thousands of persons here in the Midi. Thinking fast, the most likely place that came to his mind was the workers' school that Raoul Palma had started, and that Lanny had helped to finance for something like a decade and a half. In the course of that time hundreds of young proletarians and some white-collar workers had sat in classes in a rickety old warehouse repaired and kept clean. They had argued and fought over doctrines and party lines, and had quarrels and splits that had driven the school director and his devoted young wife almost to distraction. Until recent years Lanny had mingled with them freely, called them all "Comrade" and tried to moderate their

vehemence. A curious development, if now some zealot among them had decided to punish him for treason to the cause!

Lanny had been dealing with the underground, first in Germany, then in Spain and France; but always it had been at second hand, so to speak, through some one friend whom he trusted. This was the first time he had ever sat in a secret session. It was more like a scene in a play or a movie than anything in anybody's real life. All six of the men wore black masks, with two holes for the eyes and a slit for the mouth; they did not remove these, and Lanny got some comfort out of the fact, taking it to mean that they hadn't definitely made up their minds to dispose of him. At least he was to have a chance to defend himself. He had been thinking as hard as he knew how, and the time had come when he had to match his one set of wits against their half-dozen associated sets.

VII

"M. Budd," said the leader without any preliminaries, "would you be so kind as to tell us what is your business in France?"

It was going to be a polite session; and politeness was Lanny Budd's specialty. "*Mais certainement, Monsieur.* I have several businesses. I am an art expert, purchasing old masters for American collections. I sometimes attend to matters for my father, who manufactures aeroplanes and supplied many to the French government from the outset of the war to the end. Also, you must understand that my mother has her home at Juan-les-Pins, and I have lived there most of my life, ever since I was a child in arms."

"What are your political ideas, M. Budd?"

"I used to have political ideas, Monsieur, but I discovered that I was living in a time of strife and intolerance; since I am a man of peace, I decided to confine myself to my study of paintings. I am taking part in the forming of several great collections which will find their place in museums in the United States, and which I hope will help to raise the cultural level of that country."

"You take no part in politics?"

"None whatever, Monsieur. People try to draw me into discussions, and when they do, I listen politely to what they have to say, and tell them that I have my own specialty, and leave the solution of social problems to those who are more competent to deal with them."

"You have travelled a great deal to Germany?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"And you know Hitler personally?"

"He has been one of many clients. He purchased half a dozen

of the works of Marcel Detaze, the great French painter who was my stepfather, as you may possibly know, and who died in the war to save *la patrie*."

"You have never discussed political ideas with Hitler?"

"Monsieur, one does not discuss political ideas with Herr Hitler, one listens, often for hours at a time. I listened to such good effect that he asked me to find him some good examples of Defregger, the Austrian painter who paints peasants. I could see no harm in doing that, and he paid me the customary ten per cent commission."

"You know Göring also?"

"I first met General Göring, as he was then, when he put a Jewish friend of mine in prison. I was able to persuade him to release this friend for a high price; then he became interested in my judgment as an art expert, and employed me to market some of his paintings in New York and to purchase for him certain examples of American paintings."

"You appear to be very successful in persuading people, M. Budd." There was just a hint of sarcasm in the tone, and a suggestion: "You may not find it so easy this time!" The inquisitor continued: "You were with Hitler and Göring in Paris, were you not?"

Lanny thought: They have a good intelligence service! Ordinarily he would have been glad, but not just now. He replied: "I was invited to meet Herr Hitler at the Crillon, and I went."

"To talk to him about paintings?"

"I could not know what he wished to talk about. As a matter of fact, what he talked about was his great admiration for Napoleon Bonaparte."

"And nothing about politics whatever?"

"He talked about his plans, and I was embarrassed, because I did not want the responsibility of having such knowledge."

"Did you talk to others about them?"

"I was not told that anything was confidential, and I answered any questions that my friends asked on the subject."

"You were in Vichy not long ago, M. Budd?"

"I travel all over France. I have bought three paintings in Vichy in the past few months."

"You met Laval, did you not?"

"M. Laval owns a fine old historical painting in Châteldon, and he was courteous enough to permit me to view it."

"You called on Darlan, also. Does he own paintings?"

"Admiral Darlan was a visitor in my mother's home nearly twenty years ago. I reminded him of that, and asked him if he could do me the favour to let me travel to my mother's home in any sort of *camion*, transportation being so difficult in these times."

"And you did not have political discussions with any of these persons you know so well?"

"I did what I always do, Monsieur; I listened to what they had to tell me, and expressed no opinion, because that would have been presumption."

"And what do you do with all this confidential information that you collect?"

"None of it is confidential, Monsieur; I never permit anyone to put me in such a position. If a man says to me: 'I am going to tell you something confidential,' I reply quickly: 'Please do not, for I do not wish to carry such a responsibility. There are many chances of leakage, and I do not wish anyone to think of me as the possible source of a leak.' People of good sense respect that attitude; and people who understand what great art is appreciate that a man of art is a neutral, one whose values are permanent, and above the battle of the factions. You may recall that Romain Rolland wrote a book with that title, *Au-dessus de la mêlée*."

VIII

This was a P.A.'s regular "spiel"; the story he told to all except the outright Nazi-Fascists on the one hand, and his few trusted friends on the other. How well it might go down with these men he could not judge, for he did not see the expressions on their faces, and they had given few hints as to what they had learned about him. Evidently somebody had been watching him for a considerable time, and had reports on him from Paris as well as Vichy.

"Search him," commanded the leader, still in the even voice. This was a moment which Lanny had been anticipating—with no pleasure. The burly fellow who was his keeper dipped a hand into the prisoner's right overcoat pocket and drew out a wad of banknotes, just about all that his large hand could encompass. "*Jésu!*" he exclaimed, and held them up; it would have been a safe guess that he had never seen that much money at any time in his life.

The leader took the wad, and the man plunged his hand into the left overcoat pocket and repeated the performance. "*Une banque ambulante!*" remarked the leader, and took off his hat to hold the treasure. The search went on, and a few banknotes came from the breast pocket of the overcoat and a huge wad from the inside breast pocket. Then came the turn of the coat, and handfuls emerged from both side pockets and the inside breast pocket; then the trousers, the side pockets, and a back pocket. Two hats were required to hold it all, and they were spilling over. "Is that all, M. Budd?" inquired the man. "Or shall we strip you?"

"You have it all," Lanny said; "*ma parole d'honneur*." He preserved the tone of polite irony which had been set for this conference.

"May I inquire, M. Budd—you do not trust the financial institutions of l'État Français?"

"I have already explained to you, Monsieur, I am in the business of purchasing art works. I came to Toulon with the expectation of making a deal."

"You may save me time if you will give me an idea as to how much money we have here."

"Certainly, Monsieur; about fifty thousand francs."

"You would pay that much for a painting?"

"On a number of occasions I have paid several million francs, Monsieur."

"*Diable!* And you always pay in banknotes?"

"When I am dealing with strangers, yes. I find the psychological effect of the actual money is very great. I decide what I think a painting is worth, and I count that out in cash. Very few people are able to resist the sight, and when I start putting the money back into my pockets they hasten to accept my offer."

This information produced the first signs of life in this strangely silent band. They had sat perfectly motionless, letting their leader do all the talking. But now they chuckled; and Lanny thought, what a sensation he might have created by stating the fact: "All this money was intended for you." He might have brought this uncomfortable session to a sudden end if he had remarked: "Comrades, I am one of you. All you have to do is to ask Raoul Palma, whom you doubtless know. He will tell you that I have been bringing him both information and money, ever since Nazi-Fascism got its start."

But of course he couldn't say that; to do so would be to put an end to his career as presidential agent. He might have said: "Comrades, I put you on your honour to keep my secret." But suppose that some one of these six happened to be a spy of the government, watching this band and getting ready to turn them in? That was how the game was being played, plot and counter-plot, spying and counter-spying, all over this war-torn old Continent. Or suppose that one of the six couldn't resist the temptation to entrust so thrilling a secret to his wife or his sweetheart? The story would spread with the speed of electricity; it would reach the authorities in Toulon, then in Vichy, then Paris, then Berlin. The son of Budd-Erling would find himself arrested again, and this time his interrogation would be far less suave.

No, he had to find some way to talk himself out of this mess. He must hold on to this secret, at least up to the moment before the last.

Manifestly, he would be of no use to President Roosevelt if he were dead and buried in this rocky wilderness; so, if it came to the last extreme, he would surely confess, and go back to the land of his forefathers and marry Laurel Creston—or would it be Peggy Remsen, or Lizbeth Holdenhurst? The only trouble about this programme was that these men of the underground might not take the trouble to give him formal notice of their decision; they might think it more polite for one of them to step up behind him silently and put a bullet into the base of his skull. That thought made it somewhat difficult for Lanny to concentrate on intellectual conversation.

IX

Besides paper money, the search had yielded a watch, a fountain pen, and a small pocket comb used by a gentleman with carefully trimmed wavy brown hair. Also there were documents: a passport book, a travel permit, a *carte d'identification*, and several of those letters concerning art deals which Lanny Budd was careful never to be without. The leader examined them—he knew English, it appeared—and then ordered them returned to the prisoner. "Concerning the money, we shall decide later, M. Budd. We desire you to understand that we are not bandits, but French patriots."

"I, too, have always counted myself a French patriot," declared the captive quickly. "I have lived in France most of my life, and have never broken any law that I am aware of. I would take it as a courtesy if you would give me some idea of what I am accused."

"We will tell you in good time. We are awaiting the arrival of an investigator. In the meantime, I regret to say it will be necessary to bind you for the night."

"I point out, Monsieur, that ropes, if they are tight, stop the circulation of the blood, and that is particularly dangerous on a cold night like this."

"We will cause you as little trouble as possible, M. Budd."

Lanny decided that the man who tied him must be, not a peasant, but a sailor. He made fancy knots that were not too tight about Lanny's ankles but that wouldn't slip over his feet. He did the same for the wrists behind Lanny's back. The others rolled the logs out of the way, preparing to sleep close to the fire. They spread a blanket for Lanny and covered him up with half of it. He observed that several proposed to sleep without blankets, and he was touched by this. It was a circumstance he had noted through all the revolutions which had occurred on this bloodstained Continent since his childhood; the revolutionists had so often been humane towards their

opponents, and sometimes had lost their cause on that account. This had been the case in Germany, in Hungary, in Spain; and wherever the reactionaries had come back into power, they had killed ten for every one their opponents had killed.

But that wouldn't help a P.A., if he happened to be one whom the revolutionists thought they had to kill. He felt sure they hadn't brought him to this rendezvous in order to lecture him or to frighten him; they must be intending to close his mouth for keeps; and what more likely than that they meant to do it in a painless manner while he was asleep? So Lanny didn't go to sleep, but lay with his feet stretched out to the warmth of the fire and thought as hard as ever he had done in his life hitherto. They could hardly be intending to shoot him because he had carried messages from Pétain and Madame de Portes, mistress of the Premier of France, to Lord Wickthorpe in England; nor yet because he had talked with Hitler and Göring, and later with Laval and Darlan. None of these messages had been written, so what evidence could there be concerning them?

It must be they thought he had betrayed somebody to the Nazis, or to the *collaborateurs*. And who could it be? What trip had he taken or what word had he spoken that could have caused blame to be fixed upon him? Could it be that Raoul Palma had just been arrested, and that he, Raoul's friend from old times, was under suspicion for this? Could it be that his visits to the bookstore had been observed and misinterpreted? Was his visit to the commandant of the port being connected with some conspiracy against the de Gaullists? There was bound to be a deadly war going on between the authorities here and those who held them to be traitors to *la belle Marianne*. It would be a war of knife and dagger, of grenades and dynamite, and it would be growing hotter every day as pressure of the Nazis increased. Somehow—perhaps he would never know how—a bland and elegant *étranger* had blundered in between the firing lines of this bitter fraternal strife!

X

Lanny tried his bonds enough to make certain there was nothing he could do except to tear the skin off his wrists. He might have chafed the ropes against a rock, but he could only have got to a rock by hopping, and that would surely have awakened the men. The rope tied to Lanny's ankles was attached to the wrist of the man who was his special keeper, and who lay flat on his back on the cold ground, snoring loudly into one of Lanny's ears. Perhaps this crowd would have liked nothing better than to have the prisoner attempt to escape,

so that they might apply to him what the Spaniards called *la ley de fuga*. The fire was dying, and the cold creeping nearer, but Lanny's trembling wasn't due to that.

He was determined not to fall asleep, because he wanted to speak one sentence before anybody pulled the trigger of a gun. His eyes roamed from one to another of the sleeping forms. The leader was on the other side of the fire, wrapped in a blanket like the prisoner. Apparently there was a distinction made in favour of the intellectuals, as being more delicate and perishable; or perhaps it was up to each man to bring a blanket if he wanted one. The wind had died down, and dead cold seemed to be settling in this little valley; he wondered, was it high enough for snow in these mountains? They had seemed high, but perhaps that was because he was climbing them in the dark and his wrists had hurt.

Lying on one side with your hands tied behind your back is a far from comfortable position, especially when the fire is dying and the cold creeping into your bones. Lanny couldn't roll over without pulling on the rope and awakening his keeper; he had the impression that this keeper didn't like him anyway, and if the man's sleep was disturbed he might cast his vote for the immediate ending of his own discomfort. Lanny remembered a long night he had spent, waiting while Monck and a locksmith were trying to rescue Trudi from the Château de Belcour; this was another night of anxious waiting, and Lanny couldn't guess the time, or how far away the dawn might be. He decided that it was the stupidest misadventure he had ever got into, and called himself a booby many times over for having gone off driving with a strange woman, no matter how well mannered. Marie Jeanne Richard—that was a *nom de ruse*, undoubtedly. Who would she be? He imagined melodramatic things about her; she was a member of the d'Avrienne family, or perhaps the mistress of the commandant of the port. She had despised Lanny as a Fascist, and had done to him what he would have liked to do to every Fascist in the world!

XI

The captive could lift his head a little, and he looked at the dying fire. The moon had come up, and was sending faint shafts of light through the pine trees. Lanny saw, or thought he saw, a movement of one of the men who lay on the opposite side of the fire. The man raised his head, and then got up on his hands and knees and began to creep backward, away from the fire. Perhaps he was going to put some more wood on, without awakening his fellows; that would

be a service which Lanny would appreciate. The man got up and began to tiptoe, and Lanny watched him as far as his eyes could follow. He was the one whom Lanny had noted as having a Ligurian accent. He was coming around to Lanny's side of the circle and presently he was where Lanny couldn't see him without turning over.

The horrid idea flashed over the prisoner's mind that this might be the moment; this fellow had been ordered to put him out of his misery. Usually they did it with a shot from the rear, just at the base of the skull; that destroyed the medulla and was painless. This time since Lanny was lying on his side, a shot in the ear would be wiser, to avoid the chance of hitting the next man. Lanny's heart was pounding wildly and he could hardly breathe; he heard the man behind him, right over him. Now, if ever, was the moment to shout: "It is all a mistake! I am one of you!"

The fellow had got down on his knees; his face came close, his warm breath in Lanny's ear. The latter checked his mad impulse, realizing that this was not the posture of an assassin. The man was about to speak to him; and the next moment Lanny heard, in the faintest imaginable whisper, four French words: "*Combien pour votre liberté?*"

How much for your freedom! So, there was a traitor among the group, just as Lanny thought likely! Or, at any rate, a man who was offering to turn traitor! That psychology which Lanny had expounded had worked right while he was speaking; this fellow had gazed, with eyes popping behind his mask, at enough banknotes to fill two hats and some spilling over, and he had decided that he was in contact with one of those most godlike of human beings, an American millionaire. Who in the world, from China to Peru, has not seen them on the cinema screen, scattering largesse, commanding miracles—mountains to be removed and palaces to arise!

The man's ear was in front of Lanny's lips, almost touching them; and Lanny murmured three French syllables, slowly and distinctly, so low that it might have been a memory of speech. "*Cent—mille—francs.*"

A hundred thousand francs was less than a thousand dollars as they stood in Vichy France, and that surely wasn't high ransom for the life of a millionaire, or even a motion-picture imitation. Lanny was prepared to bid up to five hundred thousand francs, or even a million; but the next thing he knew, the man was working at the ropes which bound Lanny's hands. He must have had a sharp knife, for one or two movements cut those which bound the wrists together; he did not try to cut those which were about each wrist, for that obviously would have been difficult. With great caution he crept towards Lanny's feet, and first he cut the rope which connected him

with the sleeping guard, and then he cut those which bound the two ankles together.

He moved back to Lanny's ear, and whispered: "*Venez!*"—then arose and stole back into the shadow. Lanny, with the utmost care, rolled himself over. He found that his wrists were so weak they wouldn't hold him up. He got on his knees and elbows, and thus, with agonizingly slow movements, he got away from the dim firelight. At last he got up, and found that he could stand.

His deliverer was a dim shadow, and Lanny tiptoed after him. He had no idea in what direction they were going, but the man put one arm around him to aid his tottering steps, and together they followed a path through the thicket. The man seemed to have a cat's eyes, or perhaps he had been through it so many times that he knew every dip and turn. They did not speak a word; their bargain was made, and they had only to put as much distance as possible between them and the camp.

Before long the cords around Lanny's ankles hurt so that he had to stop and ask the man to cut them. That was pretty nearly a surgical operation, and the man performed it with care and skill, working a little slack into one cord and pressing the flesh down, so that his cut would be away from the flesh and not toward it. He did the same for the wrists, and it was a blessed relief. Circulation would come back, and pretty soon Lanny would be his active self again. "What do you plan to do?" he whispered, and the man replied: "They know all the paths, and will travel faster than you can, and their bullets faster still. We must get up into the hills and hide over the day."

"Wouldn't they be able to track us?" Lanny asked and the answer was: "Not if we get up among the rocks. The thing is to get as far as possible before dawn."

XII

The late and waning moon was hiding behind a steep escarpment. Lanny could see that it was a wild region, with piled-up rocks and cliffs, and pine and cedar trees clinging here and there. They waded a little stream, and the man said: "Get a drink, for it may be all you will have through the day." He added: "We'll have to go hungry," and Lanny replied grimly: "I can stand it." They waded downstream for a while, to conceal their tracks.

They plodded on, with brief stops for Lanny to rest, until daylight began to appear. As soon as they could see well enough, the guide picked out a spot where a dry bed of rocks made it possible to leave the path without leaving any footprints. They clambered up a steep

hillside, from rock to rock, and just as Lanny was about to gasp out that he was at the limit of his tortured limbs, they came upon a sort of little niche in a cliffside; not a cave, but enough to shelter them from sight, so long as they were content to be still. Lanny was more than content; while his rescuer sat with one ear cocked, listening for sounds of pursuit, he stretched himself out and made up for lost sleep. He was quite sure that no pursuer would find them in this eagles' roost, and he decided that he would stay a couple of days and call it a fast, something he had read about and been interested in.

The name of the rescuer was Gigi; at least that was the name he gave, pronouncing it with the Italian "g," like the American "j". he didn't say how he had got it and Lanny didn't ask. He had been conscripted into the French Army, and had decided for himself that the war was over. He had joined the rebels, not because of political convictions but because of a girl—again that was what he said. What he wanted was to get away from all fighting, and it was his plan to take his money and smuggle himself onto a ship for South America, any country that would permit a fellow to live his life in his own way. Lanny was sympathetic, and of course kept his pose as a misunderstood art expert. He gave the man his address, and assured him that the money would be forthcoming; if they became separated Gigi was to find his way to Juan-les-Pins, where Lanny would wait for some of them. "Take my advice," the man said, "and don't go back into Toulon, or somebody there will surely stick a knife into your back."

"And how about Juan?" Lanny asked. The answer was: "I wouldn't stay anywhere in the Midi. Things are hot as hell here, and nobody knows who can be trusted. They surely won't trust either of us again."

XIII

Gigi took off his mask and hid it under a rock; it would be no help to him now, but on the contrary a mortal danger. So when Lanny opened his eyes he had a chance to observe what his rescuer looked like: a fellow in his early twenties, swarthy and weatherbeaten but not especially sturdy. His father had been a railway worker, his mother had come from Liguria, the westernmost province of Italy, adjoining France. He himself had been to school, and had got a job as shipping clerk; after quitting the army, he had found there were no jobs, and so he had joined the partisans.

This he narrated to Lanny in whispers, after Lanny had had his sleep. Gigi had helped to carry supplies up to the hide-out of his

band; there were other bands, he said, but only the leaders knew where. The supplies had come from the hijacking of a government truck, but Gigi had had nothing to do with that, he insisted. Perhaps they hadn't trusted him enough.

He was a shifty-eyed fellow, good-looking in a crude sort of way. Lanny knew the type well. He had no politics, save that he distrusted the rich and feared the authorities; he wanted to be let alone and to enjoy himself. What troubled him more than anything at the moment was that he did not dare to smoke, lest it should give them away to a keen-eyed pursuer.

The more he thought about it, the more worried Gigi became over what he had done, the partisans would publish him among themselves as a traitor, and the first one who saw him would shoot him like a dog. They would be certain that he would give them away to the authorities, and Gigi lamented in loud whispers about this—it was most unfair, for he wouldn't do such a thing—how would it help him? He hoped Lanny wouldn't do it either, and Lanny said that under no circumstances would he get himself mixed up in any political dispute. His willingness to leave fifty thousand francs behind him without complaint, and to promise to part with twice as much—this impressed the Frenchman greatly, and doubtless in his secret heart he wished he had asked a higher price for his dangerous service.

Lanny tried to find out what was behind this strange misadventure. Why had the partisans picked on him? Gigi was vague, and apparently didn't really know. A messenger had come up from Toulon and had had a long conference with the leader; all the others had been told was that they were going to arrest an agent of the Nazis who had done great harm to the people's cause. Lanny tried to find out about Marie Jeanne Richard, but the other insisted that he knew nothing about any such woman; certainly she wasn't his girl, who was the daughter of a shipworker in the port, a member of the syndicalist union the Vichy Government had suppressed.

Very tactfully Lanny approached the subject of the bookstore in Toulon. He had visited the city some time ago, he said, and had there met a clerk whom he took to be of Spanish nationality; a good-looking and intelligent man in his thirties who had undertaken to find some rare books for him. But this hinting did no good, for Gigi said he had seen the bookstore but had never entered it; he was not a reading man. Lanny said the clerk had given him the name of Palma, and the other replied that he had heard the name spoken, but didn't know anything about the man. If he was a member of the partisans, Gigi wouldn't necessarily know it; they were organized in small sections and the members of one section did not know those of another. This was to make things a little harder for the *flics*.

XIV

What concerned this average sensual man was how to get himself out of great danger. He wanted information and advice, and Lanny thought it the part of wisdom to give what he could, for if this fellow were to be arrested with a hundred thousand francs on him, he would have to tell how he had got them, and that would be awkward indeed for a visiting art expert. Lanny warned him to sew the bills up in the lining of his coat as soon as he got them, and that his next step should be to purchase himself an outfit such as would be worn by a gentleman of leisure. When Gigi asked, with much concern, "How can I pass for a gentleman?" Lanny replied: "Just hold yourself straight, look dignified and important, and don't say anything except when you have to."

The man's idea was to get to Marseilles, where he had knowledge of a group of Americans who were assisting refugees to escape the clutches of the Gestapo. It appeared that he had been assigned to escort two left-wing writers, German Jews, and turn them over to the leader of this group, a young man named Varian Fry. Gigi didn't know the exact situation, but Lanny could explain it. Under the terms of the armistice the Vichy Government was required to "surrender on demand" any opponents of Nazism who might have sought refuge in their territories; but among the Vichyites, especially of the lower ranks, were some who had secret sympathies for the victims and were willing to wink at their escape. Gigi said this might be so, but the Americans were operating underground so far as possible; they carefully kept up the pretence that they were affording only food and medical care to the refugees, and nobody was supposed to know that they were also handing out forged visas and travel permits.

It was a worried Frenchman's idea that the news of his treason might not travel as far as Marseille, and that the Americans there would remember his previous visit and help him on his way. They had a plan by which Frenchmen and others who could pose as Frenchmen were dressed in uniforms and smuggled on board transports with troops going to North Africa, and to work on the railway which, under Nazi direction, was being rushed through the Sahara desert to the port of Dakar. Once in Algiers, and with plenty of funds, Gigi could be fairly sure of getting on board a ship. But he was tormented by his fears, and he wanted help from Lanny which was no part of their bargain. These times were hard upon men who wanted to live their own lives.

XV

They neither saw nor heard signs of pursuit, and since hunger and thirst are sharp spurs, they crept forth from their hiding-place before sunset. In this rugged country it would be dangerous to travel unknown paths in the dark. Lanny had but a vague idea where they were, but Gigi said it was somewhere between the Gapeau River and the coast, and that if they kept moving in one direction they would be bound to come upon a road. They passed through a forest of immense gnarled cork oaks, and soon they heard sounds of traffic; they hurried in that direction. When they reached the road they did not dare go on it but hid in the underbrush, waiting for darkness. Heavy trucks passed now and then, and Lanny observed that they were red trucks, driven by red men wearing red clothes. His companion explained that they were carrying bauxite, the ore from which aluminium is made. Lanny recalled that in his boyhood he had been taken to visit these very quarries; the red-coloured material had been going to Germany then, and Gigi said it was going there now. "*Les boches sont voraces!*"

They summoned their courage to walk on the road in the darkness, dodging out of sight whenever they heard a vehicle approaching. They had come to a stream, so thirst no longer troubled them; but hunger is a powerful enough urge, and when after a couple of hours a great mass of buildings loomed up in the starlighted sky they went toward them. Gigi said there was in the vicinity a very old abbey, long since abandoned; Le Thoronet was its name, and this proved to be the place. Some of the buildings were ruins, others appeared to be intact, and presently they observed a feeble light shining from a small cottage adjoining one. It was the home of a custodian, and when they told him they had lost their way he invited them in and set before them a meal of bread, onions, dried olives, and red wine. Lanny could not recall when any food had ever tasted so good.

The host, gruff in manner but kindly in soul, required only a robe and a cowl to make him a perfect monk. He informed them that he had that day celebrated the eight-hundredth anniversary of the founding of the abbey; he had had to celebrate all alone, but now that he had guests he would celebrate a second time, with a goblet of wine filled to the brim. He was there to show tourists about, and that was how he lived; it must have been a scant living, because they came only once a week on the average. Even so, on account of the anniversary he wouldn't take anything from the two wayfarers—which was fortunate, for Lanny didn't have one sou on his person. The old fellow asked no questions, but delivered free of charge his well-learned recital about the glorious old days when this monastery had been a

landmark of France, and the monks had feasted on fat geese and game, fish from the sea and from the river, chestnuts and melons, "figs from Salerne and plums from Digne." These good times had been ended by the Revolution, when the monastery had been abandoned.

The old monk-at-heart offered to put them up for the night, but no, they wanted to be on their way. He gave them travelling directions and suggested that they might beg a ride on one of the bauxite trucks, which oddly enough had been brought to France by the United States Army in World War I and now were serving the Nazis. When the travellers were alone Lanny voted against getting his only suit of clothes impregnated with the red dust, for his chances of getting back to Juan without money and without identifying himself depended upon his appearance. Fortunately Gigi had a few francs on him and Lanny said that would enable them to get a shave.

They had the good fortune to encounter a truck taking a load of cork down to Toulon; the driver had stopped with tire trouble, and they helped him and got invited aboard. They didn't dare go into the city, but a few miles outside they parted from their host and took a side road to the south-east. This time they flagged a peasant cart which was taking vegetables to market. It was downhill, and the man let them climb aboard; Lanny sat in Gigi's lap, and so in the early morning they rode in state into the fashionable tourist resort of Hyeres.

XVI

Lanny got his shave and had his shoes shined and his clothes well brushed. Sleeping two nights in a brown tweed overcoat hadn't ruined it entirely, and he could still be the elegant American. He might have identified himself at a hotel or a bank, but he was afraid to do so; who could tell where he might encounter a friend of the partisans? What he wanted was to get transportation and get it quickly.

He went looking for a garage or filling station—or rather for some man who had formerly been in that business. He explained that he had urgent affairs in Cannes, and wished to be driven there this morning. The man threw up his hands. "*Impossible, Monsieur!*" But the grandson of Budd Gunmakers had been taught the power of money in childhood; he felt pretty sure there would be some petrol hidden away in this town, and when he talked about three or four thousand francs for a two- or three-hour drive, the man said he would see what he could do. When Lanny raised the offer to five thousand, he said he could do it.

Gigi had followed behind, being afraid to let his millionaire out of

his sight, but afraid to be seen with him on account of the partisans. In making his bargain Lanny said he had "*un compagnon*," and when the car was ready the "*compagnon*" appeared and climbed in. Away they went, and got to Cannes before the close of banking hours; the car stopped in front of Lanny's bank and he went inside and wrote a counter cheque and had laid into his hands one hundred and ten crisp new thousand-franc notes. (The banks were stuffed with them—it was all they had.) Lanny tucked one hundred of them into an inside coat pocket, and with five in his hand he went out and paid the chauffeur.

Then he and Gigi took a walk, and when they had come to a solitary spot Lanny took out the hundred notes and counted them one by one into the hands of the pop-eyed ex-shipping clerk. "There you are," he said. "Thanks ever so much and good luck to you." They shook hands and Gigi walked down the street, looking this way and that very nervously, and so passed out of the life of Lanny Budd. Now and then the P.A. would wonder: had some woman got the money away from him the first night, or had he been impressed into those labour gangs which the Nazi-French were driving to quick death in the hot wastes of the Sahara? Now and then Lanny would shiver at the thought of one of those *râfles* which the police were conducting everywhere throughout Vichy France, rounding up all the men in some public place, a cinema or bistro or café, inspecting their papers and perhaps shipping them off to work in the Sahara. Suppose the police should find that money, and trace the bills by the serial numbers—what would Lanny tell them had been his reason for paying such a sum to an ex-shipping clerk and army deserter? For a painting, perhaps? And what painting, Monsieur?

XVII

Even more serious was his worry when he got back to Bienvenu and found there a letter from "Bruges." The postmark showed that it had arrived on the very morning that Lanny left; the postman didn't get to Bienvenu until mid-morning, and Lanny had made an early start. The letter said: "I am sorry to have to tell you that the Daumier drawings of which I wrote you have been sold; all except one which is not representative of his best work. Its subject is a rather unpleasant one, of a man being tortured by bandits, and I doubt very much if it would please you, so it will not be worth while for you to come."

Obviously, Raoul was withdrawing his invitation to Toulon and warning Lanny of danger. He must have got some hint of the sus-

picion existing against his friend. But how had the partisans known that Lanny was coming to Toulon? Surely Raoul wouldn't have talked about it! And could it be that suspicion had now fallen upon Raoul? Did his absence from the bookstore mean that the partisans had been holding him? Or had they sent him on some errand, to get him out of the way while they dealt with Lanny? It must have been well known to them that Raoul and Lanny had been friends in the old days of the school, and Raoul could have had a hard time convincing them that those old days were no more. Would they now suspect Raoul of having plotted with Gigi to help the prisoner escape?

During the rest of his stay in Bienvenu, the P.A. didn't once dare to go out by night, and he spent a lot of time trying to think of some way to get in touch with his friend and help him if help was needed. Then one morning came the postman with one of those humble-appearing notes which said so much in so little:

"*Cher M. Budd:* Just a line to tell you how pleased I am with the little travel picture. I keep it before me always. I am well and busy. Best wishes. Bruges."

So there was one more chapter which Lanny Budd closed!

BOOK FOUR

PUT IT TO THE TOUCH

12

Lieb' Vaterland

I

LANNY BUDD wrote a letter, in English:

"DEAR RUDI,

"I have done quite a lot of travelling since we last met in Paris. I have been all the way to California and have met a number of persons you will be interested to hear about. There is one important piece of news which can hardly have reached you and which I think you ought to have. Would it be possible for you to meet me in Switzerland? I do not suggest coming into Germany, feeling so embarrassed because of the part my country has been playing in the present struggle. It seems to me hardly possible that the German people can tolerate the presence of any American. But I know that you personally won't blame me, and your friendship is valued by me, as you no doubt know.

"Also, I have had some very interesting experiences with Madame Zyszynski. One of Tecumseh's prophecies came true in a most extraordinary way. The old lady's health has been better this winter. Conditions of travel are so hard that I wouldn't think it wise to bring her now, but when the weather moderates we might work out some way for you and your friends to see her again. I am at my mother's home in Juan-les-Pins and will wait for your reply to this letter.

"*Mit deutschem Grusse* to you and to our mutual friend,

"Your devoted Lanny."

This was addressed to Reichsminister Rudolf Hess at his Berlin residence and marked "personal." Lanny knew that mail going into Germany would be censored, but he could feel certain that no German would interfere with a letter to the Number Three Nazi. He had studied every word of it carefully; Madame Zyszynski of course was

a bait, one which he had used more than once with Hess, who was as deeply interested in psychic matters as Lanny, and far more credulous. His suggestion of Switzerland was likewise a blind, for he doubted very much if Hess would leave his own country at the present time, and anyhow, it would be impossible to meet him secretly in a foreign land. Lanny wanted very much to meet Hitler, but he didn't want to ask to meet him, he wanted to be asked. "Our mutual friend" of course could mean nobody else, for the Führer was first in Rudi's thoughts and was supposed to be first in Lanny's.

In due course came the reply:

"DEAR LANNY,

"I have your letter, and of course I want very much to see you, but I cannot possibly get away from my heavy duties. Do forget your idea that anybody in Germany will blame you for what has happened. We know that we have many friends in America and we appreciate them. You will be heartily welcome. I, too, have things to tell you. Assuming that you will come by way of Switzerland I am giving orders to our Consulate Generale at Berne to provide you with a visa. If there should be any hitch, put in a telephone call to me and describe it as personal.

"Our friend is well, but heavily burdened. I will tell him that you are expected.

"As ever yours,
"RUDI."

There were to be trains going up the Rhône valley, all the way to Geneva, so Jerry Pendleton had been told. Whether promises would be kept was anybody's guess, but presently Jerry phoned and reported that by the magic which he understood—a small *douceur*—he had obtained for the world-famous *connoisseur d'art* M. Budd a first-class accommodation. The train was to leave in the evening, but Jerry said: "You had better be on hand in the afternoon, and take a lunch-box and a bottle of whatever you want."

Beauty Budd would see to that, of course. She was greatly disturbed by Lanny's insistence upon taking journeys in these dangerous times, but all he would say was: "Picture business." When she protested, he grinned and said: "Old darling, that's the way I earn my daily bread!" Long ago this woman of the world had learned the sad lesson that if you nag the lordly male he stops coming to you. So *Bienvenu* was a rendezvous and mail-box from which a P.A. could conduct his intrigues, and pending his arrival, Beauty would put his mysterious letters away in a special compartment of her *escritoire*. No doubt she studied their outsides carefully, and learned to know

the writing, and which kind sent him to Switzerland and which to Toulon.

Had she been fooled by her son's gradual shift of political opinion? He thought it unlikely, for she was an old-time intriguer, having assisted Robbie in the handling of munitions deals to the extent of tens of millions of dollars. She knew all about how to manipulate a personality and to guide a conversation into a certain field; she had helped to teach Lanny, and when she saw him doing it, she must have understood every move and every word, and had no trouble in guessing what he was trying to find out. When he refused to take his mother into his confidence, she could be sure it was because he had given his word to somebody, and it must be somebody of importance. Through all the ages it has been the fate of women to bear sons with pain, to rear them with pains, and then see them go out into a world full of perils.

II

Lanny's journey was slow and uneventful. There was no difficulty at the border, for Swiss officials came on the train at the French border town of Annemasse, and Lanny's papers were in order. So once more he walked the streets of the very old city of watchmakers and money-lenders of which he had become fond. Geneva wasn't an exciting place from the standpoint of a world traveller; its burghers were staid and, if reports were true, rather smug concerning themselves and their town. But that didn't trouble Lanny, whose interest in night clubs and social gaieties was purely professional. The city was clean and its views fine. At Bienvenu he had left the beginnings of spring, but here it was still mid-winter; snow in the streets, and nothing but snow on the mountains. He liked to walk, and found the cold bracing; the absence of almost-nude ladies on the waterfront was soothing to the senses of a gentleman whose duties compelled him to lead a celibate life.

For many years one of Lanny's pleasures in this old city had been to call upon his friend Sidney Armstrong, one of the officials of the League of Nations. Now, alas, that dream of the world's idealists was a war casualty; its beautiful white limestone palace was closed for lack of funds and Sidney had returned to the land of his fathers and was teaching a course on international affairs in what was contemptuously known as a "freshwater" college—that is to say, one which didn't happen to be Yale or Harvard or Princeton. Visiting that palace would have been like visiting the grave of his Grandfather Samuel Budd in Newcastle, a duty which Lanny had so far neglected,

and for the neglect had been severely censured by the old gentleman's spirit, or whatever it was that spoke through the lips of Madame.

Always, in any part of the world, a P.A.'s first duty was to establish himself as an art expert. In this town Lanny knew an elderly lover of paintings, a merchant by the name of Fröider. He was always happy to see a visitor from overseas and to hear about events in the art worlds of Paris and London and New York. Lanny talked freely, and was rewarded with local news; the Swiss "cheese king" had recently died and left some paintings which his widow was disposed to get rid of. Lanny was pleased to be introduced to this lady and inspect her collection. He found in it two very good examples of the work of Segantini, a true genius who was claimed by both the Swiss and the Italians. He had painted in the high plateaus and had almost frozen while doing so. Lanny found it interesting to contrast him with the Dutch van Gogh, who had almost been burned while painting the dazzling sunlight of the Midi. Lanny's client, Harlan Winstead, had been wanting a Segantini for a long time. Also there were several works by Ferdinand Hodler, a Swiss painter who had been taken up by the Germans prior to World War I, and had decorated the walls of several of their universities. But he had turned against his patrons during the war, and so he was no longer their idol. Art is a weapon!

All this took time, but he was in no special hurry. The reports of what he was doing spread quickly through this small city, which was like a village—indeed, Lanny had observed that the wealthy class in every city constitute a village, and are as much interested in gossip as if they could look out of their parlour windows and see what was going on. Lanny wanted to establish himself as a person who had a right to be here, now and for the future. The Swiss, on account of their precarious position, were intensely concerned to preserve their neutrality, and to restrict the activities of the many sorts of agents who infested the country. Nazis or anti-Nazis, it was all the same to the Genevans; what they wanted was to dodge the bombs. Many of them hadn't even wanted the League of Nations in their midst.

III

An impeccably dressed American gentleman strolled along the lake-front and looked at the blue water, too deep to freeze. He looked at the monuments of Protestant reformers, as every tourist does. He stopped in at the art shops, to see if by any chance a genius had arisen in Geneva. So far they had been rather scarce. Perhaps geniuses have to break rules, and here it was hardly ever done.

A man's thoughts are his own; and always in Lanny's mind was the hope that he might run into Bernhardt Monck, and follow him at a discreet distance to some place where they could exchange a few words unobserved. Almost a year had passed since they had last met here, and Monck had told Lanny that it was the intention of the Wehrmacht to make a surprise raid upon Denmark and Norway. Since then Lanny had had only two letters from this man of the German underground, one-time sailor and Social-Democratic party official. The last letter, brief, carefully veiled, and signed with the *nom* "Brun," had informed Lanny that the writer had been ill, and that he had been unable to find any paintings which he thought worthy of an expert's distinguished attention; however, he wanted Herr Budd to know that he was not neglectful and would write as soon as he found anything good. Then silence; and of course that might mean anything in the case of one who was being ceaselessly hunted by the Gestapo.

The last rendezvous had been in the public library, which is in the University buildings. Lanny went there every day and took a look around the reading-room. Failing in this, he did a little manœuvring and caused his friend Herr Fröider to mention his presence in the city to an editor of the *Journal de Genève*. There was published a brief interview in which Lanny didn't say anything about having purchased paintings for Marshal Göring and the Führer, but confined himself to mentioning important American collections to which he had been privileged to contribute. This, of course, brought letters from persons who possessed what they thought were old masters. Also, it served its secret purpose; for next afternoon, when Lanny entered the reading-room, he saw there the shaven bullet head and the broad shoulders he knew so well.

He took but one glance, then seated himself and pretended to read a book. Now and then he stole a look, and when his eyes met Monck's for a fraction of a second, he went back to his reading. When he saw that Monck had left, he got up and strolled out. Monck was going down the steps of the building, and Lanny followed across the park and into a street of shops. The man stopped in front of one of them and stood looking into the window; Lanny did the same, and heard a voice murmur: "Reformation Monument, nineteen hours." Lanny whispered: "Right," and the other strolled on.

That was the way they had made their contact a year ago, and it had served all purposes. The Reformation Monument is a long wall with statues of the Protestant reformers and heroes. At seven in the evening, in the month of March and in the shadows of high mountains, it is dark; Lanny strolled to the spot, which is in the same park as the University. He made sure there was no one following him, and when he saw his friend he followed to a spot where by a street light

they could see a space all around them and at the same time be protected in the shadow of some shrubbery. There they spoke in low voices, and used no names.

"What has happened to you?" Lanny asked.

"They tried to finish me off," was the reply. "Two men slugged me on a dark street. They meant to kill me, but as it happened, a man came out of a house near by and so they ran away. I was a bit tougher than they had reckoned on. I was laid up in hospital for a spell, but I'm all right now."

"What did the authorities do?"

"It was some time before they could question me, and then I pretended to think it was an ordinary robbery. If I had admitted the truth, they would probably have ordered me out of the country, and there was no place I could go. It is a bourgeois government, you understand."

"Surely so. Did your enemies get any papers?"

"What they got gave them no information, of that you may be sure."

"You are still in danger here?"

"It is a war. I am more careful; I do not go into lonely places, and if I see anybody trying to get near me, I am not ashamed to run like the devil. Once this excited the suspicion of the police and they questioned me; I told them that I had been robbed once, and that I was afraid. They are suspicious of me and have set traps more than once, but they have never been able to get anything on me. My papers are in order and I have money in the bank, what more can you ask in the bourgeois world?"

"You haven't had any news for me of late?"

"Our group has met with a calamity, and I no longer have the sources of information that were of such benefit to us. I do not know just what happened; my key man disappeared—that is all I have heard. He may have broken under torture and revealed his own sources of information. It is a war fought in darkness and you do not see your foes."

"You attribute the attack on you to betrayal in Germany?"

"Who can say? I have always taken it for granted that the Nazis here would know me. The police of this city have made it clear that *they* suspect me, and there is apt to be a connection between them and the Nazis. Capitalist governments talk about liberty but what they mean is property. If they have to choose between a Nazi and a Red, they are for the Nazi ninety-nine times out of a hundred. If I were to meet with a police official or a consul or anybody in authority who held the balance even, I should honour him as a great man; but it has not happened to me yet."

IV

Nothing would have pleased a P.A. more than to sit down over a meal or before a warm fire and have a long talk with this one-time sailor, labour leader, and Capitán of the International Brigade in the Spanish civil war. He had been able to do it in Paris a couple of years ago, but not now in anxious and beleaguered Geneva. However, he couldn't resist the temptation to say: "I have been worried about you. Tell me something about how you live."

"I live with a Calvinist family," replied the man of the underground; "that helps to keep me respectable. I am not permitted to earn money, but I am permitted to compile data on the diplomatic history of Switzerland during the Napoleonic wars. This I do conspicuously in the library, and keep the results piled up on the desk in my room. What I do at other hours I cannot tell even to you, *lieber Genosse*."

"Surely not," agreed Lanny, who had his own secrets. "Tell me this much: you have another contact?"

"I had two, and still have one; it is not so good as the other, but I hope to improve it."

"Don't answer any question unless you think it proper. Is the underground meeting with any success in Germany?"

"I wish to God I could say yes, but I cannot. The enemy is utterly ruthless; they will kill a thousand innocent persons to get one guilty. They are extirpating us root and branch."

"I am to tell my friends outside that they are not to count upon any uprising from within?"

"They can count upon a few persons to gather information, and even that will be greatly restricted, for facts are suppressed and it is difficult to obtain them. If your friends count upon more than that, they will be disappointed. Tell them not to blame the people too severely; all those who have brains and conscience have been murdered, or else are in the concentration camps, which are a slower form of murder. This war will be fought to the end, and with a bitterness never known in modern times."

"Not in Spain?" inquired the P.A.

"The Spanish are an incompetent people; the Germans are the most competent in Europe, and perhaps in the world. If you Americans wish us to think otherwise, you will have to prove it. Tell me, what is the meaning of this 'lend-lease' that I read of in the papers here?"

"It is a name which makes it possible to send help to Britain without frightening the American people too greatly." Lanny could have said more, but he was here to listen.

"Tell me this for the comfort of my soul," persisted the Capitán. "How far can America be counted upon to see it through?"

"I think you can count upon us not to let Britain go down."

"That will mean a long war. You will have to conquer half a continent."

"Our people do not realize it yet. They will move step by step, but in the end, I believe, they will do what they have to." Lanny would have liked to add: "I, too, have sources which I am not free to talk about." Instead, he continued: "I want to tell you that I got your information by mail and put it to the best use I could." This referred to the tip Monck had sent him, that the Wehrmacht was about to invade Holland and Belgium. "Not much use was made of the information, so far as I could see, but that is because statesmen are elderly and slow on the take-off."

Monck no doubt smiled in the darkness as he replied: "I belong to that class which, always and everywhere, pays for the blunders of statesmen."

V

Snow had begun to fall, which seemed to add to the feeling of inhospitality in Geneva. Both men were stamping their feet, for one does not stand still very long after dark in this high Alpine winter. "Tell me," Lanny said quickly. "Which way is the enemy going to move?"

"Everything indicates that it is to be the Balkans."

"And after that?"

"As I have told you, my source of really dependable knowledge is silent. From other sources I am led to believe it will be straight eastwards."

"I too have a source of information, and am glad to have it confirmed. The campaign will begin this summer, I take it?"

"Not later than July. They expect to finish the job in a month, or two months at the utmost; but military men insist upon having a margin for error."

"One thing more: I am on my way into Germany. Do you know of any reason why I shouldn't go?"

"There is always danger, of course; but I don't know any reason having to do with *my* activities."

"Your source who has disappeared didn't have any hint concerning me?"

"Not the slightest. Of course, when we stole one of Göring's super-chargers and smuggled it out of the country, you ran the risk that, if Göring missed it, he would guess you or your father must

have had something to do with it. If he is keeping track of your father's doings, he may know that you have that gadget."

"My father says it has been so much improved that Göring wouldn't know his own child. I have visited the fat boy since then and he gave no sign of having any suspicion. So that is a chance I don't mind taking. But when you tell me about getting sluggish, I want to be sure it wasn't on my account."

"I have not spoken or written of you to anyone. Whether anybody is shadowing us now is something about which you can guess as well as I."

"Thanks, dear comrade." Lanny held out his hand and clasped the other's. "I am doing my job and I know that you are doing yours. Let us hope that we shall live to see the day when we can sit down together and swap experiences! Meantime, *adios!*"

They parted, and walked by different routes; and be sure that Lanny kept looking in all directions, and that until he got into the frequented streets he was prepared to run fast!

VI

Lanny moved on to Berne, where he found the efficient governmental machine of the Germans all ready for him; a clerk in the Consulate Generale gave him his visa and his travel permit to Berlin. A "blue train" carried him overnight and delivered him at the Anhalter Bahnhof, bombed and now partly repaired. A taxi took him to the Adlon, where he found "business as usual"; American journalists still making its bar their "Club," and men of important affairs from all over Central Europe mixing with S.S. and Wehrmacht officers. The surroundings were elegant, the service perfect, and if there was a shortage of coal it was surely not felt here.

Lanny telephoned to Hess's office in the Party headquarters, and was invited to meet him that evening at Horcher's restaurant. Then he went for a stroll, to see what a year and a half of war had done to this proud cold city. He saw a few vacant places where once had been buildings; but they had been unimportant buildings, and he realized that the Nazi *Hauptstadt* had sustained little bomb damage as compared with Britain's capital. From the point of view of the bombardier Berlin was several times as far from London as London was from Berlin, the reason being that the Germans had their bases near the French and Belgian coasts, whereas the British had no place nearer to Berlin than the county of Kent. The debris was cleaned up quickly by Polish war prisoners. Everything was rationed, and the system worked perfectly, because everybody obeyed orders or went to

jail. The people on the streets were well fed and clothed, and if anybody was worried because the war had lasted so long, he wasn't going to let a visiting *Ausländer* know it.

However, Lanny knew how to find out what was really going on in people's minds. He telephoned his old friend Hilde, Fürstin Donnerstein, well-spring of gossip. "Lanny Budd! *Ach, wie schön!* Come and have coffee—the last that I possess!" It was the same old Hilde, but he thought her voice sounded subdued, and when he entered her drawing-room he understood why; she was in full mourning. Her oldest son, the adored Franzi, had been killed in Poland. "The most awful thing!" she exclaimed. "A whole year after the fighting was supposed to be over, some wretched partisan hiding in a forest threw a hand grenade at him!"

Poor Hilde! The visitor had no words—none that would help her. He had met her just after the boy had gone off to the war, and had tried to cheer her with the idea that it wouldn't last long. Now he thought: She looks like an old woman—though she wasn't as old as himself. She sat with tears streaming down her cheeks, and he knew there were millions like her, in Germany and France and Britain, Poland and Czechoslovakia, Holland and Belgium and Denmark and Norway—and now all the way down into the Balkans. He had no words for any of them.

Presently she got herself together. Weep and you weep alone! Hilde was an extrovert, and very, very extro, all the way to the great capitals of the fashionable world. How was Irma, and was she really getting along in her new marriage? How was Beauty, and what a strange marriage that had been! How did matters stand with Sophie, Baroness de la Tourette, and with Margy, Dowager Lady Eversham-Watson? In happier days all these ladies had visited Berlin, and Hilde had visited the Riviera and Paris and London. Now it was all over, and what a cruel and stupid thing had taken its place! The Four Horsemen riding!

This wife of a retired Prussian diplomat, now assisting in the air-raid protection of Berlin, repeated her usual performance of making certain that no servant was listening at the doors of her drawing-room, and then putting the tea-cosy over the telephone because of the generally prevalent idea that the Gestapo had some way of hearing, even while the receiver was on the hook. She sat close to Lanny and poured out her feelings, which exactly corresponded to those of the Countess of Wickthorpe—so he was able to tell her. She hated this war and all the people who were waging it. She didn't think it made any difference who won, the members of her class would lose, and the only ones who would gain were the Bolsheviks, those wolves who were lurking in Russia and in the slums of all Europe's great cities.

It was the suicide of *der Adel, le gratin*, the upper crust—this high-strung lady spoke an international language, made up of all the smart words of half a dozen languages, including Stork Club and Algonquin Hotel. If she liked something it was *très rigolo*, and if she didn't like it the thing was either lousy or putrid, depending upon whether it was American or English. Nothing pleased her more than to have Lanny repeat the latest *Witz, bon mot*, or wisecrack that he had picked up among the *elegantissimi* of his acquaintance. That bright world of dining and drinking and setting off verbal fireworks was gone forever, and it seemed to Lanny that the princess was in mourning for it as much as for her son. (She could only wear this costume in the house, she told him; outside it was *verboten* as being bad for morale.)

For Lanny this conversation wasn't just gossip. The Donnerstein palace was a centre of hospitality for important people, the military, the industrialists, the diplomatic world, and Hilde knew not merely jests but also state secrets. Where the son of Budd-Erling was concerned she had no particle of discretion, for he was one of the "right" people, who were entitled to know what was going on and would repeat it only to others of the same sort. She had admired him, and after her friend Irma had discarded him she had gently and tactfully "propositioned" him—to employ the American slang which she found entertaining. That had been some four years ago, which made it ancient history according to modern ideas; but the ashes still smouldered, and it wouldn't have taken much breath from Lanny to have fanned them into life again. A P.A. has to use every arrow in his quiver, so he put a lot of warmth into his conversation with the Fürstin Donnerstein, even while telling her what part America was going to play in the war, and hearing her tell the details of Nazi intrigues in Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey.

Lanny mentioned that he had an appointment with Hess for that evening. He made a *moue*, to show that he didn't expect to enjoy the occasion, and this served to start Hilde on a train of delightful revelations. Had he observed the glum looks, the brooding stares, which the subordinates of the beetle-browed *Nummer Drei* had learned so to dread? Lanny had been in that strange household, and had a chance to observe the tall, severe-looking lady whom the Deputy had taken to wife—or who had been assigned to him by his *Nummer Eins*. Had Hilde ever told him the rumour, which was whispered among some insiders in the regime, that the little son whom the pair called "Buz," and of whom they pretended to be so fond, was not really the Deputy's son, but was the progeny of a too-friendly doctor at Hildelang? The Deputy himself was impotent, like his Chief, and their monstrous efforts at dominance and glory were meant to com-

pensate them in their own hearts for a shame which tormented them Lanny said: "A strange and terrible world!" His friend replied: "We are on our way to some dreadful catastrophe, and we are all helpless."

VII

Horcher's restaurant was a rendezvous for the powerful and wealthy Nazis, and it was a compliment for a foreigner to be invited there. Hess had engaged a private room, which meant not merely that he wanted to talk confidentially with his friend from overseas but that he himself was a man who did not care to show off or be stared at. He wore his simple Brownshirt uniform, with no decorations but the swastika. He was a man of about Lanny's age, vigorous and athletic in appearance. He had been born in Alexandria, the son of a wealthy merchant, and had been given an English education; his manners were reserved and quiet, and Lanny had to keep reminding himself that he was a killer; that he had taken part in all the Nazi brawls from the early days, and bore a scar on the side of his head where he had been hit with a beer mug. He had helped to build the Party, and had run it ever since the Blood Purge, for which he had his full share of responsibility.

Rudolf Walter Richard Hess was a fanatic who meant to make the world over in the image of his Führer, and who stopped at no means that would contribute to this end. He had a strange grim face, a mouth that made a straight line across it and heavy black eyebrows that made another line—continuous, with no break over the nose. His eyes were a greyish-green, and when he was angry with a Party delinquent he didn't have to say a word, he just glared out of those eyes and the victim wilted and his knees began to tremble. Unfortunately for the Party, but fortunately for the rest of the world, his forehead was rather low and his intelligence limited; he had begun as Adi's secretary, and he remained that in spirit even when he became a Reichsminister.

For a friend whom he trusted, this man of many cruelties would put on a genial smile and play the perfect host. To him Lanny Budd was a gentleman of high position who was heart and soul with the National-Socialist cause; who had been offered money more than once, but had turned the offers down and came freely to give such advice as he could. During the meal Lanny talked about psychic wonders, which he felt free to invent *ad lib*. Looking into a crystal ball he had seen an auto wreck, and a week later had come upon exactly that scene on the famed Harrisburg-Pittsburgh pike. With Madame he had had a marvellous séance, at which the spirit of Hinden-

burg had appeared; *der alte Herr* had been in his most sublime mood, and had dictated messages prophesying mastery of all the eastern half of Europe for his successor whom he had once insulted by calling him "the Bohemian corporal." All this the Deputy swallowed along with his broiled venison and hot-house asparagus dipped in mayonnaise.

Lanny told about London, Paris, Vichy, and then New York, Detroit, and Hollywood. After the meal had been eaten and the waiters had retired and the doors were shut, he went into really confidential matters: the significance of Lord Wickthorpe's resignation, and the strength of the movement he represented; the motives of the two bitter rivals, Laval and Darlan, and the probable consequences of the latter's recent advancement; and then, most important of all, the possibility of the removal from power of That Man in the White House who had become of his own evil choice a menace to the German cause.

Hess hadn't heard about the conspiracy against Roosevelt, except in vague rumours: "Somebody ought to shoot him!" Now he plied his guest with questions: Who was in the cabal and how far had it gone and was likely to go? Lanny said: "I gave my word of honour not to name the persons, and it wouldn't do any good for me to do so, because you cannot work with them; it would be fatal to their plans for any of them to be seen with your agents. The movement has to be simon-pure American, and it is necessary for those who take part in it to deny that they have any sympathy with Nazism. It may even be better that they believe this—as many of them do. You know how it was with your own movement, what harm it would have done if anybody had been able to show that you had been getting funds or even ideas from Russia or Britain or France."

"Of course," admitted the other. "But there may be ways we can help in strict secrecy."

"Your agents have their hands full defending your own cause. Some of them are quite influential and worth at least part of what they charge you. Forrest Quadratt, for example."

"You don't think him trustworthy?"

"I wouldn't say that. He is skilful in promoting his private interests, but at the same time there can be no doubt that he believes in National Socialism. He has hitched his wagon to your star."

VIII

The Deputy Führer was fascinated by Lanny's account of life at San Simeon. When he heard that a film star slept in Cardinal Richelieu's bed and that her apartment was known as "the Celestial

Suite," Rudi made a wry face and remarked that it sounded like Karinhall. Lanny smiled, and didn't need to say anything, because he had been Göring's guest, and knew all about the fantastic extravagance there; also how the ascetic Hess despised those members of the Party who used their positions to enrich and glorify themselves.

Lanny told everything that Hearst had said, and didn't mind adding a number of things he hadn't said but might have. Rudi discussed Hearst and praised him highly; he said that was the true type of American, the men of the Far West who had conquered savages and subdued a wilderness. Such men knew how to rule and they didn't shrink at the thought of what you had to do in order to command a world full of fools and rascals. Lanny said that his grandfather had been such a man, but that he himself was too soft, he feared; he would never do for a man of action. That was the line he had taken all his life with Kurt Meissner, and apparently it went equally well with Rudolf Hess, who said with a friendly smile that he could soon make a man of action out of Lanny, but that he preferred him as a man of information.

A friendly compliment, this gave Lanny an opportunity. "I am afraid I won't be of much use to you for a while," he remarked. "You appear to be headed for the Balkans, where I have never been and have no friends."

"Don't worry," was the prompt reply. "We shan't delay long in that quarter."

"It may take longer than your leaders expect, Rudi. Are you sure the Yugoslavs won't resist?"

"Resist the Wehrmacht, Lanny? You must be joking."

"Don't forget, they have a lot of mountains."

"And we have mountain divisions. We can cut their armies to pieces in a couple of weeks."

"Well, I don't pose as a strategist, but it's obvious that you are operating on a very close time-table. Your move on Russia cannot be delayed longer than July."

The Deputy looked startled. "Who told you we are going into Russia?"

"I have a lot of friends, Rudi." The P.A. smiled gently. "Also, I have a normal amount of common sense. You have to have oil; and it is obvious that you wouldn't dare leave a left flank of a thousand miles exposed to the Red hordes."

This remark had the Deputy Führer rather stumped. He looked at his guest and remarked: "These matters are supposed to be top secret, Lanny."

"Naturally, Rudi. And please get it clear that I am not asking any questions, or even hinting for confidences. I am an art expert, and I

find that I can earn a very good living, even in wartime. But I don't want to see the Reds sweep over Europe, for then I wouldn't be able to earn anything, and wouldn't want to. We'd probably both be liquidated together. You know that."

"Yes, of course."

"Well, I meet some influential man in London or New York, and he says: 'What in God's name can we do about the labour unions and the Reds?' I answer: 'It seems to me Hitler is the fellow who has the answer.' He says: 'Yes, I know that,' and I say: 'Well, then, why don't you make a deal with him, instead of helping to wipe him out? Let him be the one to put the Reds down for you.' To that there is always one objection: 'Can we trust him to do it?' Believe me, Rudi, that's the way it goes, all the way from London to Hollywood—everybody asks the same questions and raises the same objections."

"But what can we do, Lanny? The Führer has made his attitude plain, over and over again. To him Bolshevism is the devil incarnate."

"I know it, else I wouldn't be here and I wouldn't be your friend. I couldn't be, unless I believed in your integrity. But the problem is to convince other people. They say: 'Hitler has made a deal with the Reds.'"

"But that is obviously only a temporary matter, Lanny. Britain and France drove us to it; the French had an alliance, and the British were threatening to make one."

"The average man forgets all that—even the average big businessman in America. I have to say: 'I know. I have talked with the Führer, and with his Deputy. The goal of all their efforts is to end that horrid menace on their eastern border. As for Britain, they desire nothing so much as an understanding, a settlement that will give Germany her outlet to the east.'"

"Absolutely, Lanny!"

"The trouble was, I hadn't seen you for the greater part of a year. I suppose twenty times someone said to me: 'Yes, but that was more than half a year ago, and maybe they've changed their programme—how can you be sure?' So finally I said to myself: 'I'm out-of-date. I'll go back into Germany, and sell a couple of paintings for Hermann to provide an excuse. I'll see Rudi and maybe the Führer, and hear what they have to say now—if they care to talk to me.'"

"I certainly care to, Lanny. There has been no change—quite the contrary. It is literally an agony to me to see Germany and Britain destroying each other. I don't want to bomb London, and neither does Hermann—he will tell you that. I give you my word, I valued the Guildhall as much as I do the New Chancellery, and I value what each stands for. I want a truce, and a deal that will last. I want an

end to this madness, and I have heard the Führer say the same thing a thousand times. He doesn't even ask that Britain shall help us against the Reds. We can do it alone, and we ask only that Britain give up her insane rage against us."

"I don't say that it can be done, Rudi; I would be a fool to say that. But I promise to do my best. If the Führer will say that to me with his own lips, I'll go out and repeat it, word for word, as faithfully as a phonograph, to a dozen key men in London and the States. There's just a possibility that Churchill might be overthrown, as well as Roosevelt, and this fratricide might be brought to a halt overnight."

"I assure you, Lanny, I'd give my life to bring that about. I mean it literally—for I have fought in the trenches and know what it means to be ready to die."

"I have never fought, Rudi, but I know I'd be willing to, in this cause. Let's try it together, and see what we can work out." It was on that bargain that they shook hands.

IX

Lanny telephoned to the official *Residenz* of Hermann Wilhelm Göring, Reichsmarschall, Reichsminister, and bearer of so many other titles that his own staff couldn't remember them all. The caller asked for Oberst Furtwaengler, who had been his friend for a matter of seven years; Lanny learned that he had just been promoted to Generalmajor. "*Herrlich, Herr Budd!*" exclaimed the SS officer, who, unlike most of them, aspired to be taken as a man of European culture. "I heard that you were in town and meant to call you." They exchanged compliments, and Lanny asked after the Generalmajor's charming wife and his children—there was a new one. Only after he had shown the proper amount of interest in a staff officer did he venture to inquire: "Is Seine Exzellenz visible these days?"

"*Leider*, I am not permitted to say where he is at the moment. But I can reach him."

"Tell him that I really ought to see him before I leave. Since we last met I have been in Vichy France twice, and in Britain, and in America all the way to California. I have some important messages for him. Also, I have news about paintings, though I don't suppose he has much time to think of that subject now."

"Don't mistake him, Herr Budd—nothing will ever be permitted to diminish his interest in paintings. I will get in touch with him and call you."

So Lanny settled down to study the four pages which now comprised the *Völkischer Beobachter*, from which one could learn much

about conditions in Berlin. It was before the time that death notices were prohibited, and very nearly a page of the paper was given up to advertisements, paid for by relatives according to the German custom: each a tiny oblong enclosed in a black border, and each reverential in tone. "Fallen on the field of battle, in the twenty-second year of his dutiful life," or something like that, and always a pious phrase, with Adolf Hitler substituted for Deity: "In the service of the Führer," or "gladly, for the Führer"—all morale-building phrases.

All the war news was favourable; the German people were not told the details of how the British had swept the Italians almost all the way out of Libya; they were told about the achievements of the German air corps which was stationed in Sicily and was closing the Eastern Mediterranean to the British and making Malta all but untenable to the foe. They were told that pro-Nazi governments were now firmly established in the Balkan states and that a pact had just been signed with Yugoslavia; they were not told that the people of Yugoslavia were in revolt against this deal—something which Lanny had learned from the newspapers of Switzerland. In every line of the *Völkischer*, one could see the fine Rhenish hand of the crooked-limbed and crooked-souled little Reichsminister, "*Unser Doktor*," who decided each day what the German people were to believe about their world.

The Generalmajor phoned. His great Chief would be very happy to meet Herr Budd, but it would be necessary to fly. Lanny said: "I don't mind flying—especially when I have one of the Reichsmarschall's pilots." The staff officer replied: "*Aber, es ist Krieg.*" Lanny said: "I'll take my chances."

One other detail, rather embarrassing, explained the officer; it would be necessary for the guest to be blindfolded. To this regulation there was no exception for *Ausländer*, even the most distinguished. Lanny laughed and said: "I would be willing to be blindfolded for a week if I were sure of seeing Seine Exzellenz on Saturday night." A Nazi who aspired to be taken for a good European found this delightfully clever.

A staff car would call for him at ten o'clock next morning; meantime Lanny went shopping in Berlin. He wanted to write a letter asking a price for a certain painting which he had viewed on his last trip; and apparently somebody had been too greatly tempted by the folder with a few sheets of carbon paper which he kept in his suitcase. Anyhow, it couldn't be found, and Lanny wanted one sheet—just one

sheet of carbon paper ! He wandered from shop to shop, and everywhere he saw a generous stock of all kinds of goods in the windows, but when he went inside he found that the shelves were bare. "*Leider, mein Herr,*" they would say. "*Wir hoffen,*" but never, "*wir haben!*"

When he mentioned that this or that was in the windows, the answer was: "But those are not for sale." When a perverse foreigner persisted: "Why do you keep them there?" one clerk replied: "*Polizeilich empfohlen*"—which fell rather oddly upon foreign ears, meaning in literal translation: "Policely recommended." That struck Lanny as a characteristic Nazi phenomenon; the police didn't have to order, it was sufficient if they "recommended" that the show windows should be kept well filled. Some shopkeepers were saving trouble by setting a little sign alongside the goods: "Not for sale" !

One thing was plentiful and free, and that was music. Any day you could hear the three B's, Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms; but only one M—Mozart, never Mendelssohn, who stood for Jewish shallowness and frivolity, or Mahler, who stood for Jewish pretentiousness. Lanny went to an afternoon concert, and found it crowded with reverent people. He could have his own emotions and his own thoughts, but they couldn't be happy ones, for in his soul was infinite unending grief for a Germany that had been murdered, or was being murdered day after day; for all the monuments of the old German civilization that were being bombed out of existence, and for all the potential Mozarts and Beethovens who were being slaughtered on battlefields far from home. Most of all he mourned because he, Lanny Budd, who had so loved German culture, now had to hate it and do everything in his power to bring it to destruction. Was there anybody else in this symphony hall thinking such thoughts while the tragic funeral march of Beethoven's *Eroica* was being played? And if there was anything in the theory of telepathy, what a jangle of brain waves this foreign visitor must have been creating !

Back to the hotel, and dinner with one of Lanny's client's, an elderly merchant who loved fine paintings. Lanny guessed that he must be in need of funds; and certainly, by his appearance and behaviour he was in need of a dinner. It might be possible for Lanny to take a painting out with him—he would ask Oberst Furtwaengler about a permit, and would probably get it. They agreed upon a price and Lanny saw the old gentleman out into the blackout, and then went to bed early, for an air-raid alarm was always to be expected, and resort to the shelter was *polizeilich befohlen*.

The British bombers left their homeland at about dusk. They had become wary after a year and a half of conflict with the Luftwaffe and with the anti-aircraft guns which surrounded every German target of importance. If they were bound for Central or Eastern Germany they would fly over the North Sea and come in by unexpected routes. It seemed that one of their purposes was to deprive good Germans of their sleep, for they would aim for one city and then veer off to another. They were due over Berlin shortly after midnight, but they would vary this, too. All good Berliners now slept in their underwear, and kept their shoes and trousers and overcoats close at hand. They loudly cursed the malicious foe, calling him an enemy of humanity, a throwback to barbarism, a monster out of hell. Lanny, listening, would have liked to ask: "Did you never hear of Guernica and Madrid, of Warsaw and Rotterdam, of London and Coventry?" But of course he couldn't speak such words, and indeed he avoided speaking any word of that language which unfortunately was called English and not American. He rolled his "r's" and growled his gutturals so that no shopkeeper or waiter or other humble German might report him for a spy.

Some time in the wee small hours the sirens screamed. Lanny slipped into his clothes and ran down three of the five flights of stairs in the Hotel Adlon, and one more into the basement—it was forbidden to use the elevator. There was a well-appointed room with comfortable chairs for the guests; none of the help appeared, and presumably there was a separate shelter for them. Lanny had an interesting experience, for in the seat next to him was an elderly gentleman in the uniform of a Rumanian general; he had a grey moustache and—believe it or not—rouged cheeks; his figure indicated that he was wearing corsets. He sat very stiff and stern, telling the world that he had no particle of fear, and also that he did not care to engage in promiscuous conversation.

There was something vaguely familiar about his face, and Lanny kept stealing glances at it; he had met so many officers in so many gorgeous uniforms in the course of a social career which had begun very young. Finally it came to him, and he leaned over and whispered: "Pardon me, but is this by any chance Captain Bragescu?"

"General Bragescu," replied the other, with heavy accent.

"You were Captain when I knew you, sir. My name is Lanny Budd, and my father is Robert Budd who was European representative of Budd Gunmakers."

"Oh!" exclaimed the other. And then: "Oh!" again. "You are that little boy who took me torch fishing!"

"And you speared a large green moray," supplied Lanny. "A dangerous creature. And you told me about how they catch sturgeon

at the mouth of the Danube and cut out the black caviar and throw the fish back alive."

So the great man unbent and they had a jolly time, even with bombs crashing not far away, and people cringing in ill-concealed terror all about them. The Captain had visited Bienvenu to make a deal for—what was it? Oh, yes, automatic pistols! And he had stayed a couple of days, and had thought Lanny's mother the loveliest woman he had ever laid eyes on. He didn't mention it now, but he had been greatly disappointed to discover that she didn't go automatically with the pistols. He had been entertained by a lively and talkative little boy, already a man of the world prepared to deal with every social situation. More than a quarter of a century had passed, but it all came back out of the deep, deep memory ocean. And before they went back to bed, the General, who was in Berlin representing the new Fascist government of his country, was telling this sympathetic American all about how the coup d'état had been pulled off, and what territorial emoluments had been promised his native land.

The Least Erected Spirit

THE staff car took Lanny to the great Tempelhoferfeld, which now, of course, was a military port; but there was nothing secret about it, it was one of the landmarks of Berlin and could not be camouflaged. Only when the visitor was taken out into the field and placed in the co-pilot's seat of a fighter plane did the polite young flight officer put into his hands a small bandage of black silk cloth with two elastic straps in black. "*Verzeihung, Herr Budd,*" he said, and Lanny replied: "*Danke schön,*" and proceeded to put it over his eyes, which it covered completely. "*Richtig?*" he asked and the other replied, American fashion: "O.K." He added: "Please, you are not to touch it under any circumstances." Lanny replied: "I understand."

The plane took off with a roar. It had been headed east, and the pressure on Lanny's body told him that it was making a half turn. Of course Göring's headquarters—*Gefechtsstand*, it was called, "combat station"—would be in the west, probably in Belgium or north-eastern France. Lanny was used to planes and the difference in their

sounds, and he could tell that this was one of the fastest; he guessed that he would be sitting here for an hour and a half or two hours, and he sat slumped in the seat with his arms folded and his mind on the details of what he hoped to get from the fat commander.

They were flying low—Lanny knew that because he had had no crackling in his ears. Time passed, and he was thinking that they must be going far into France, when the pilot leaned toward him—the only time he spoke during the trip—and shouted: "*Wir sind nah daran.*" The plane made a half circle, the engine slowed, and with a light bump the wheels touched the ground. A voice said: "*Guten morgen, Herr Budd. Oberleutnant Förster.*" Lanny recalled one of the younger officers whom he had met at Karinhall. His hand was taken and he was helped down from the plane and from it to a car—still with the blindfold in position.

He had tried to guess what sort of place he was going to. It would be the advanced headquarters of the Luftwaffe, from which the fighting across the Channel was being directed. It would be an ultra-secret place, and necessarily large; it probably wouldn't be new, because it must have been needed in great haste. It would be some old château in a forest; it would have an airfield near, but not too near, for airfields were an invitation to bombing. The *Gefechtsstand* would be a great telephone exchange, with direct lines to every field in Germany and the conquered lands, and likewise to all the centres of government and industry. The supreme commander would have a sound-proof room, and a desk with several telephones on it, and a strong and comfortable chair in which he could sit and rave and storm and curse and govern the Luftwaffe, just as Lanny had heard him doing from the *Residenz*, and from Karinhall and Rominten and the Obersalzberg and other places where Lanny had been a guest over a period of eight years.

All this fitted in with being led along a gravelled walk, and ascending half a dozen deep stone steps, and passing into an interior where there was a murmur of voices and echo of footsteps in a spacious place. Then down a long corridor with many people passing, coming and going with brisk quick talk. They stopped in front of a door, the door was opened—and suddenly came a bellow: "*Jawohl! Wie geht's bei dem blinden Maulwurf!*" It pleased the old-time robber baron to command: "Stand the *Schurke* up against that wall and shoot him!" Lanny of course grinned—for he mustn't let any old robber get a "rise" out of him.

The Oberleutnant slipped the bandage off his eyes; and there stood the figure whom all good Germans loved; they called him, affectionately, "*Unser Hermann*," a liberty such as they never took with the Führer. He was several inches shorter than Lanny but made

up for it in girth; he had weighed two hundred and eighty pounds the last time he had reported to his art expert, and certainly he hadn't lost anything since then. He wore a simple blue uniform appropriate to wartime, and his only decoration was the eight-pointed gold marshal's star; but he would never be without his emerald ring, about an inch square, and a bunch of diamonds on one finger of the other hand.

He always roared when he saw visitors; a medium roar if he was glad to see them, a double roar if he was angry. He always grasped Lanny's hand with one which was full of power, and Lanny, forewarned, grasped back with determination. He looked at his host and saw that his usually florid features had paled startlingly. That was what ten months of unanticipated war had done to him; ten months of incessant worry and thwarted hopes, for the adored Luftwaffe hadn't been able to knock out the Royal Air Force, and Hermann had had to tell his *Nummer Eins* that it was impossible to invade England then, perhaps ever. No doubt he had taken many a tongue lashing for his *Dummheit*, his *Eselei*, his *Blödsinn*. Quite a change in two years, from the happy day when the Führer had given a banquet to big leading generals and imparted to them the tidings that he had decided to wipe out Poland. *Der Dicke*, according to one of his aides who had blabbed to Lanny, had been so delighted that he had leaped onto the table and danced a war dance.

The visitor had time for a glance about him and saw that he was in a high-ceilinged room with all the marks of elegance: carved panelling, a marble fireplace, and heavy tapestries on the walls. Hermann Wilhelm Göring would never fail to do himself well. It was undoubtedly a château, and he had conquered it and was making himself at home. On his desk was a tray with an emptied glass of beer and the remains of sandwiches; there were remains also in the fat man's mouth, and now and then he made an explosive sound which had caused Robbie and his son, strictly in private, to give him the code name of "Sir Toby Belch." In Lanny's world it wasn't considered good form to mention those sounds, but Hermann thought they were funny, and when he laughed, everybody laughed with him.

II

But now, to business! "*R-r-raus!*" said the commander to his subordinates, and signed his guest to a chair by the desk. "*Na, na, Lanny, tell me where you have been and what you have seen, und was zum Teufel treibt dieser verdammte Roosevelt?*"

Lanny began the long story which he had told so many times that he could have said it in his sleep. First Pétain and Laval and Darlan

and all that Vichy crew; then London, and Wickthorpe and his friends, and the meaning of his resignation; then the land of America Firsters and isolationists, of crowds that shouted to keep out of Europe's troubles, and fellows in the country clubs who raved about "That Man" whom "somebody ought to shoot." *Der Dicke* plied his guest with questions, and it was a pretty stiff examination; he didn't want anybody feeding him any *Bonbon*, he said—it was the Berliners' word for candy; he wanted the real facts, and if they were tough, all right, he would take them.

Lanny said: "Of course, Hermann. I tell you what I have seen and heard; but you have to allow for the fact that I don't meet the war crowd; those *Hurensöhne* wouldn't associate with me, and I don't have a chance to ask them any questions."

"How do you get along with your father?" the fat commander wanted to know. He knew Robbie Budd, respected him, and had done business with him as long as he could.

"It's rather complicated," explained the son. "Robbie has the excuse that he can't help what he's doing, and he has to consider the interests of his stockholders. I just can't agree that stockholders come ahead of civilization, and I think Robbie ought to hold out and put up a harder fight against the New Dealers who have practically taken him over. I think I may have influenced him to some extent, for the government is very ill-satisfied with the quantity and quality of the Budd-Erling plane. You may have noticed that the R.A.F. isn't using it very much."

"Yes, but I understand there is a new model in production now."

"When I asked Robbie about that he chuckled a little and said: 'You wait and see.' I had to be content with that, because of course it's the most ticklish subject in the world. My guess is Robbie has tucked his best secrets away for future use; but if the government had the slightest idea of that, they would take over his plant quicker than you could bat an eyelid."

"I'm surprised they haven't done so," commented the Reichsmarschall.

"There's generally a reason for things like that. You'd be pleased to know how many people there are in the Administration who don't like its policies and do what they can to hold back. You must understand that distrust of Britain is taught to every school child in America; and from the practical point of view many of our business leaders look upon the British Empire as their principal competitor. Britain is a maritime power, like America, and these business-men think we could get along a lot better with a land power like Germany."

Der Dicke didn't want any *Bonbon*, but Lanny observed that when one was put into his mouth he swallowed. "*Ganz richtig!*" the greedy

one exclaimed; and when the visitor went on to tell about the great conspiracy that was going to put an end to Jewish-plutocratic Bolshevism in America, he beamed like the cat that had swallowed the canary. He was too well informed a man to believe that Roosevelt was a Jew, but he knew that Morgenthau was, and Frankfurter, and Frank and Rosenman and Baruch and Cohen—he had them at his tongue's end, even down to David K. Niles.

The plot to get rid of them all at one fell swoop seemed to him perfectly natural and exactly in order; it was what Hermann himself had done in the summer of 1934, and if rumour could be believed he had forced the Führer's hand on that occasion. While the Führer had flown to Munich to confront his old pal Röhm, he had left Hermann in control of Berlin, and Hermann had taken the occasion to uncover a wide conspiracy and to slaughter something like a thousand persons, including General Schleicher, one of Göring's own sort, a high-up Junker Wehrmacht man. Now the *Nummer Zwei* rubbed his hands in glee as Lanny described the rapid progress the New York and Washington conspiracy was making, and the results that would flow from it, the instant cutting off of the newfangled abortion called "lend-lease," which was really a declaration of war against Germany, though Germany was unfortunately not in a position to take up the challenge at the moment!

III

This man of action wanted to get busy on the proposition without loss of time. He had his own men in New York, he said, independent of everybody else, and he wanted to give them the tip and let them help with funds, and to keep their master informed day by day. But Lanny said: "For God's sake, go slow, Hermann; you might queer the whole deal. You must understand that this is dynamite; if the least hint reached anybody that the Germans were backing it, all the important men who are in it would have to drop it like a hot poker."

"That may be true; but there are tactful ways of going about the matter."

"If it was you doing it, there might be intelligence enough; but don't you know what secret agents are, as a rule?"

"*Idioten!*" exclaimed the Air Commander. "*Scheisskerle!*" He started cursing, and Lanny perceived that a sore spot had been touched.

But Göring couldn't drop so important a subject. He so hated and feared Roosevelt, and he so dreaded a long war, the thing against which the Oberkommando had warned everybody from the begin-

ning. Surely he ought to make some move in the case of Hearst, who published his articles and paid him sumptuous prices ! Surely Hearst would receive a representative of a featured author !

Lanny said: "You must understand that Hearst has a million enemies, and he is afraid of every single one of them. He owns eighteen great newspapers and he worries about each one, and what his enemies might do to ruin it. Right now he would be afraid to be seen in the same room with any German."

"But I could send an American to him."

"How would Hearst know that he was an American, and that he wasn't a plant of the British government, or even of the F.B.I. ? Take my word and let me handle this. I am going back soon, and these people have known me a long time, and they know that I don't want any of their money. Be sure they don't need yours ; good God, man, they have most of the money in the world. And do you want to squander what *Valuta* you have stowed away in New York ? "

That was the right way to put it. "All right, Lanny," said *Der Dicke*. "Do what you can, and come back and tell me, because I am worrying myself to a skeleton over this war that I never wanted and tried my best to prevent. You know that is true, don't you ? "

"*Ja, und als ganzer Mann!* I'll give you a certificate any time you ask for it." To himself Lanny was saying: "*Du alter Windbeutel!* You told me in 1939 you had stuck out your neck in 1938 and would never do it a second time ! "

IV

The Reichsmarschall bawled for his lunch ; it was five minutes late, he declared, and nobody thought to mention how recently he had stuffed himself with cheese sandwiches and beer. Orderlies came running and wheeled in a table and brought trays containing *Hasenpfeffer* and a large platter of cold meats, fried potatoes, and canned peas, buttered toast, a *compote* with rich cream and cake—you would hardly have guessed that the country was at war. *Der Dicke* went at it, and bade his guest do the same. Despite the fact that he came of a good Prussian family, his table manners were hardly pleasant ; he stuffed and belched and then stuffed some more ; he talked with his mouth full, and still more embarrassing, laughed loudly with his mouth wide open. "I am done with this dieting business," he declared. "I am going to be as fat as Nature meant me." Then: "But what do you think they have got for me here, to reduce me ? " When Lanny couldn't guess, he exclaimed: "An electric horse ! I am supposed to sit on it and get bumped."

"I hope it is a good strong horse," grinned Lanny.

"A dray horse, the kind that used to haul beer barrels. A Percheron, from Normandy. I pass by and look at it, and that is all I need to do. The very thought takes several pounds off me!"

The guest brought up the subject of art, and found that it was as Furtwaengler had stated. *Die Nummer Zwei* bubbled over with delight. "I am in the wholesale business!" he declared. "I have all the worth-while paintings in Belgium and Holland and France! There has been nothing like it since art was invented."

"I have heard rumours about it," said the other, sharing the mood of opulence.

"It is like something out of the *Arabian Nights' Enchantments*. I can hardly believe it myself. I no longer have time to look at them, I can't even study the lists. I take them in the form of statistics."

"Where are you keeping them?"

"I won't tell you where—you mightn't be able to resist the temptation!" *Der Dicke's* wide mouth spread most of the way across his face, so great was his amusement.

"At least you can tell me what you plan to do with them."

"I am going to build the greatest museum the world has ever seen, a temple of the art of all nations—a separate wing for each. The world will say there never was such a collector and never will be again. I have already drawn the plans and submitted them to the Führer."

Lanny became suddenly serious. "Listen, Hermann; let me help with this."

"Would it really interest you?"

"*Herrgott!* Have you forgotten that I am supposed to be a *kunstsachverständiger*?"

"All right, you shall be my adviser. There will be a lot of trash, naturally. I was too busy to look at them. I just said: 'Take everything, and we'll decide later.' You shall weed out the second-rate, and we'll have nothing but the best."

"I have been helping to make just such a collection for an American millionaire; but of course not on any such scale."

"There will be nothing like this in all the world. People will remember the Hermann Göring art collection when they have forgotten who built the Luftwaffe."

"I don't think the British and the French are going to forget that for quite a while, Hermann."

"Have another piece of cake," said *Der Dicke*. "You like this Château-Chalon? I got it from the cellars of the duc de Montalembert. Enough to last me fifty years."

"Are you afraid to tell me where you have *that* stored, Hermann?" So they jested, back and forth. It was American, not Prussian; the Reichsmarschall and Reichsminister wouldn't have taken it from one

of his subordinates, which was why they bored him, and why he liked this visitor from overseas—a crazy country, full of eccentricities, amusing on the cinema screen and over the air, but now becoming dangerous and having to be taught a lesson in *Machtpolitik*.

Was it some such thought as this? A shadow passed across the broad fat face, and he reached for a little bottle of white pills which he kept in his pocket. It might have been some harmless stuff, say bicarbonate of soda for his belching; but there was something furtive in his action, and Lanny quickly turned his eyes to his own glass of white wine. He knew that after World War I the fugitive Captain Goring in Sweden had become a drug addict, a serious and violent case who had to be consigned to an institution. Nothing was more likely than that under the strain of disappointment and suspense he had gone back to his habit. Was that why his fat features were sallow instead of rosy, as Lanny remembered them from Paris, less than a year ago? It was a visitor's business not to know about this, and to continue his cheerful line of conversation.

V

Lanny Budd had emptied his intellectual purse; he had given his host all the information he had, and no little entertainment. Now, after the tables had been wheeled away and they were once more alone, it was the time to collect what he could. He proceeded to give the Reichsmarschall the same line of talk that had worked so well with Kurt Meissner and Rudolf Hess. Everywhere he travelled in France, Britain, and America, his appeaser friends wanted to know what the Führer's intentions were, and to what extent they could count upon him for the all-important task of putting down the Red menace. It was the art expert's hope to have a little of the Führer's time, and get this question answered at first hand, not because he had any doubts as to where the German armies were going when they had finished in the Balkans, but because the men of big industry who controlled the foreign policies of the Anglo-Saxon lands wanted this assurance as the basis of all their planning for world peace.

"When the Führer tells you," said *Der Dicke*, "I wish you would come and tell me."

Lanny grinned. "You are trying to make me believe you don't know where the Luftwaffe is going next?"

"Upon my honour, Lanny. The Führer keeps his own counsel, as he did during the Polish crisis, and before that, over Czechoslovakia."

That was disappointing. Goring was a far more intelligent man than Hess, and wasn't going to swallow Lanny's bait so quickly.

"Tell me what I am to say for you, Hermann—to Wickthorpe and his friends, and to Hearst, and to Henry Ford, who is standing out against making munitions for the British."

"My attitude has not changed a particle; and in this I know that I speak for the Führer too. This war is the greatest calamity that has ever befallen civilization; it is the suicide of the Aryan peoples—the very ones who were in position to take control of the world and keep the backward tribes in order. If I could talk to the key people of Britain and America, I would get down on my knees and beg them to stop and reconsider, before it is too late."

"That is a good line, *lieber Freund*; I shall not fail to quote it. *Aber*—you must understand, this is not Lanny Budd talking, this is the people I shall meet. They say: 'Germany has a deal with the Bolsheviks now.'"

"No man with any sense could fail to know that that is a manœuvre, a temporary device. The West forced us into it—the Franco-Russian alliance, and the Franco-British mission in Moscow. Could they expect us to sit still and let them weave a spider's web all around us? Other nations can expand, but never Germany. For us—*Einkreisung!*"

"That is an old story, Hermann; it has all been in the newspapers, and in the Führer's speeches. When I take the long trip into Germany, a difficult matter in wartime, it is not to have lessons in history. My friends will expect me to bring out something new, something that meets the situation of the moment. Tell me what you want these friends to do."

"I want them to get off our backs while we do the real job that every civilized man knows has to be done. Look at me: I am the Chief of the Luftwaffe, and when I make my plans to protect our armies in the east, I have to keep half my forces in the west. I have to know that our blood brothers, our fellow-Aryans, will be sending their planes to bomb our cities and kill our civilian workers and their women and children. It is a crime, Lanny, a monstrosity!"

"You don't have to tell me, Hermann; I can't sleep at night for thinking about it. The question is, what is to be *done*?"

"Nothing can be done so long as those two bandits, Churchill and Roosevelt, can sit at the telephone every night and plot new destruction."

"That is elementary, and I know hundreds of people in the two countries who realize it just as clearly as you do. But the problem is, where to begin? Somebody has to trust the other. When you move against Russia, our side has to know it and be prepared to come to your defence. You must understand, I'm not hinting for information—I have it quite definitely that you are going to attack Russia not later than July. The problem is to convince the people abroad that it's no

bluff, but that they're really going to get the thing they want so desperately."

"If I had charge of our foreign policy, I would say to Britain and America you want me to pull your chestnuts out of the fire for you, but I am nobody's monkey. If you want this job done, come and help, instead of trying to destroy me."

"You mean, you would take up a defensive strategy both east and west?"

"*Gerade das!* We have conquered an empire, and who can take it from us? Let Britain and America come and try!"

"But you know that is not the Führer's temperament, and not his policy. The Wehrmacht is getting ready to overrun Russia, and the Luftwaffe must be doing the same."

"Well, Lanny, if you know that, it's all right with me; but don't ask me to talk about it. See the Führer, and if he tells you, then you will really know."

"I am embarrassed to approach him, on account of my father's position, so hard for him to understand. Would you care to tell him that I have information which it is worth while for him to hear? You remember, you did that at the height of the Polish crisis. I wasn't able to do what we had hoped, but it did no harm to try."

"How long do you intend to stay?"

"I am at your service. In a crisis like this a man does not think of his private affairs. But, at the same time, if you have any painting you want taken out, I may be able to arrange it. Our State Department puts many obstacles in the way, but so far my father's influence has been able to overcome them. By the way, he asked me to be sure to give you his cordial greetings, and his assurances that he is doing as much as any one mere business-man can."

VI

Lanny Budd learned that one way to keep the favour of these great and busy persons was to offer to leave promptly. It flattered them to have the value of their time appreciated. But, as it happened, *Der Dicke* had a different kind of vanity; it pleased him to declare that he had so systematized his work that he could always take time off. "I want you to meet some of my boys," he said. "I have several decorations to confer."

It was to be a formal ceremony, and Lanny was asked to stand beside one of the windows, out of the way. Göring pressed a button and gave a command, and presently came the sound of marching in the hall. There entered the room, first, a man in the uniform of a

Luftwaffe general, a man young for that high rank, with a round, rather boyish face, pink cheeks, and dark hair close cut. This was General Milch, Göring's assistant and right bower; he had been suddenly promoted from lieutenant-colonel, something deeply resented by old-line Wehrmacht officers. Milch had a Jewish father, and was one of those military men who saved their careers by having their mothers make affidavit that they had committed adultery and that the Jew was not the actual father. One look at Milch and you would know the mother's offence was perjury, not adultery; but the Nazis didn't go by looks, they went by instructions. Göring had said: "It is I who decide who is a Jew!"

Two subordinate officers followed, and behind them marched half a dozen flight officers of various ranks, all very young, all solemn and exalted. They stood in a line before their fat commander, and saw nothing grotesque about him, but on the contrary worshipped him as the second-greatest man in the world, the author of their victories, the maker of their careers. Göring, grave as a priest celebrating high mass, stood in front of the first in line, saluted and said: "Leutnant Sieghammer, the records show that you have shot down fourteen enemy planes, that you have been twice wounded, and that when obliged to parachute to the ground you gave first aid to a wounded comrade in spite of your own wounds. I honour your heroism, and that of your comrades who are here before me. In the name of the Führer, and as a symbol of the gratitude of the German people, I present you with this Iron Cross, first class, which you will wear with pride for the rest of your days and pass on to your descendants."

The cross was about two inches each way, and without a ribbon. It was pinned onto the coat, on the left side below the chest. The young flyer's thin face was flushed with excitement; he had fair hair and sensitive features, and bore a startling resemblance to Alfred Pomeroy-Nielson, the baronet's grandson. To Lanny it was a confirmation of what the Reichsmarschall had just said, that this was a fratricidal war, that these boys who were machine-gunning one another in the air were in very truth blood brothers. Hard indeed not to want that fighting stopped!

Göring repeated the procedure in front of each of the group, refreshing his memory from little cards. When the ceremony was over he ordered everybody at ease and chatted with his heroes. He brought Lanny forward and introduced him as "*ein amerikanischer Freund des National Socialismus*." Each man bowed sharply from the waist and expressed his sense of honour. They were as much like automatons as twenty years' discipline could make them; but one was a little different, a rolypoly, somewhat the shape of his Kommandant, but with dark hair and lively dark eyes. He bore the name of Bummel-

hausen, which was to say the least unusual, like a burlesque name on the vaudeville stage. "*Es ist ein besonderer Vorzug, Herr Budd*"—an unusual privilege—exclaimed this youngster, and Lanny asked: "Have I not met you before, Herr Bummelhausen?"

"It is my younger brother whom you met, Herr Budd. He was one of a group of the *Jugendschaft* who were camping in the Teutoburger Wald, and you were motoring and stopped at their camp-fire."

"Oh, surely! I recall it very well."

"You gave them a little talk about the Führer, and then you were introduced to them, one by one. My brother was so excited over shaking a hand that had shaken the Führer's hand that he has never stopped talking about it. I suppose he has told it in my hearing two dozen times."

"Well, now," smiled Lanny, "you will be able to tell him that you have shaken the same hand—and much more important, you have shaken the hand of the Reichsmarschall, the Father of the Luftwaffe."

Little shivers were running up and down a P.A.'s spine. What a small Germany it was! In August, less than two years ago, when he had been helping Laurel Creston to get away from the Gestapo, they hadn't dared to stop at any hotel; they had come upon this youth encampment, and Lanny had had the bright thought that here was a place where they might spend the night without having to sign their names in a register. They had been introduced to a line of eager, excited boys, and one had borne the name of Bummelhausen, which had amused Lanny. He had commented on it later to Laurel, and it had become in their conversation a symbol for the robots turned out by the Hitler machine, the faithful and adoring children who would grow up to become crusading warriors, dying gladly on a hundred battlefields for the glory of their heaven-sent Leader.

"Where is your brother now, Herr Leutnant?" inquired the American friend of National Socialism.

"He is training at Kladow, Herr Budd, and hopes to get his wings next month."

Lanny said no more, for the subject was one full of danger. What if the youngster had heard of "*die Miss*," and were to ask after her? Lanny moved on to chat with the other men.

Later he discovered that he had made as deep an impression upon the elder as upon the younger Bummelhausen; for when he had bade farewell to the Reichsmarschall, and was blindfolded and driven back to the airfield and seated in the plane, he heard the familiar young voice saying: "*Gut Rutsch, Herr Budd! Gut Rutsch!*" That was the airmen's phrase for "pleasant journey." Like the British and Americans, they relieved the tedium of war by making a language of their own. Oddly enough, Lanny discovered that the civilians of Berlin

were doing the same. Back in his hotel, he happened upon one of his father's business friends; they had a chat, and when they parted, this elderly steel magnate remarked: "*Bolona!*" Lanny wasn't sure that he had heard aright, and ventured to ask about the word. The other laughed and explained: "That has taken the place of '*Adieu*' with us Berliners. It is made of the syllables of '*Bombenlose Nacht*.'" Bombless night—of which Lanny saw few while he was in Berlin.

VII

In the headquarters of the Hitler Youth organization sat a patient and faithful bureaucrat who was one of Lanny's oldest friends in Germany. Heinrich Jung was only three years younger than the American, but had always looked up to him, because Lanny had been a guest at the castle of Stübendorf, where Heinrich's father had been *Oberförster*, head forester of the estate. Such class feelings were in the very bones of an honest German lad, and not even a Nazi revolution could get them out.

Always hitherto Lanny would telephone and invite his friend to have lunch at the Adlon, and Heinrich would be proud and excited to be in this fashionable expensive place, among visiting headliners and high-up SS officers. Always he would invite Lanny to his office and show him off to the rest of the staff. Once he had had Lanny for an *Abend* at his home, to meet Heinrich's Party friends, and eat *Leberwurst* sandwiches and drink beer—the dullest imaginable occasion.

But this time it was different. Heinrich said: "Let me come to see you privately. There is a matter to be explained." Lanny said: "*Ja, gewiss*," and smiled to himself, knowing perfectly well what it was. Americans had come to be the most hated people in Berlin at this hour; not even the Jews stood so low. Heinrich Jung, in spite of his knowing the Führer personally, stood only medium high in the Party hierarchy, and he had a wife and half a dozen blue-eyed and fair-haired little Jungs to think about.

Lanny spared him the embarrassment of having to explain. "*Ich versteh', alter Kerl*," he said, and added: "I am the one to be embarrassed, because of the way my country is behaving. I only hope it isn't going to make any difference in our friendship."

"*Ach, Lanny, niemals!*" The Youth officer bubbled over with cordiality, to make up for his cowardice; and Lanny, who despised the Nazi soul, was a bit sick at heart but careful not to show it. Heinrich had been caught young, and would never grow up mentally, because he was a prisoner of the forces inside himself, the Prussian spirit which made it necessary for him to have someone to obey, even

someone to tell him what to believe. Adi Schicklgruber had told him, and for the rest of his life Heinrich would be a smooth and efficient cog in the machine which the Austrian painter of picture postcards had constructed.

Heinrich hadn't seen the face of his divinity for a year or more, being afraid to trouble him in a time of stress. Lanny revealed how Hess and Göring were trying to arrange a meeting for Lanny, and promised that if it took place he would tell Heinrich, if permitted. Meantime, he recounted his visit to the Air Marshal's *Gefechtsstand*, and sang the praises of those noble boys who had deserved so much from the Fatherland, and had received it in the form of an Iron Cross measuring two inches horizontally and the same vertically. If anything was needed to re-establish the social position of an American visitor, this was it, and Heinrich began to wonder if he hadn't made a bad mistake.

VIII

The Youth official began to talk about his own work, and this was what Lanny wanted. Several times the P.A. had been able to find out what progress the underground was making in Germany by means of the documents on Heinrich's desk. Bernhardt Monck had been in despair over the situation, but would have been encouraged if he had been able to hear the report of his enemy. The Fatherland was under great strain, Heinrich explained, because the war had lasted so much longer than anyone had expected. There were many signs of discontent among the workers, signs which Heinrich blamed upon what he called *die verfluchten Kommunisten*. It was the older men, who had belonged to the Red trade unions in the old days. Never the youth—no, no, the youth were magnificent, they were the Führer's own children, those young heroes whom Lanny had seen in the *Gefechtsstand*.

But some older men resented the food rationing, and the long queues for everything they and their women tried to buy. They it was who went out at night in the Wedding area, where they lived, and in the Hasenheide section to the east, and painted Communist signs on pavements and the walls of buildings. "*Rotfront siegt!*"—the Red Front conquers! They it was who met in the back rooms of saloons and gave the Communist salute of the upraised fist instead of the Hitler salute of the arm and hand extended straight. Such a little thing it might seem, but what a world of difference it meant as to what was going on inside the saluter's head!

This was a terrible thing, for it was treason in the very heart of the *Neue Ordnung*, and the traitors had the cunning of Satan himself.

When the Soviet Foreign Minister had come to Berlin to negotiate a trade treaty, they had bought up every red carnation which could be found in the city and had worn them openly on the streets. As you passed them you would hear humming of "The Red Flag," and there was nothing that even the Gestapo could do about it, because, as it happened, the dissidents had stolen for that revolutionary hymn the tune of an old German *Volkslied* which the National Socialists taught to all children. "You know, Lanny—'O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,'" Lanny replied: "Yes, I know. We in America stole the same tune. At the outbreak of the Civil War the Southerners made up some verses called 'Maryland, My Maryland.' But that was eighty years ago, and it no longer does any harm."

"Ja, freilich," assented the Youth leader. "But it's a different matter when working people hum a tune as they pass you on the street, and you know they are telling you: 'We'll keep the Red Flag flying here!'"

In the midst of these revelations, the telephone rang: the Führer's secretary calling; Herr Budd was invited to call upon the Führer at eleven o'clock the next morning in the New Chancellery building. It was a command, and Lanny said: "I will be on hand." To the awe-stricken Heinrich he remarked: "*Mein Alter*, it was you who took me to the Führer the first time, and I wish I could take you now." "*Um Himmel's Willen, nein!*" exclaimed the reverent disciple. "He must have great matters of state in mind, and for me it would be a preposterous intrusion."

Lanny consoled him by becoming confidential. "What the Führer wants is to tell me what I am to say to friends of our cause in Britain and America as to the terms on which he would be willing to make peace."

To this the bureaucrat replied: "Isn't it marvellous, the progress our armies are making? Just count the countries: Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Holland, Belgium, Luxemburg, France, and now Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria. Soon we shall finish Yugoslavia and Greece! There has never been anything like it in the whole of history!"

IX

Promptly at the appointed hour the P.A. presented himself at the main entrance to the immense long building which Adi Schicklgruber, the greatest architect in the world, had designed and constructed: four stories high, rectangular and stern like a barracks, and built of grey granite, as sombre as the soul of its designer. To the SS men on guard—the Führer's own *Leibstandarte*, in green uniforms—all

Lanny had to do was to present his visiting card and say: "I have a personal appointment with the Führer." They had a list, and when they had checked it, one of them escorted him in.

There was a corridor half a block long, floored with red marble. The door to the Führer's offices had a great monogram in brass: AH. A secretary who knew Lanny greeted him politely, took his hat and coat, and ushered him into the huge high-ceilinged room which Adi had designed, presumably to have something bigger and more impressive than Il Duce in Rome. Once Adi had been a waif, sleeping in the shelter for tramps in Vienna, and being put out of it because he wouldn't stop spouting. Now the whole world was hardly big enough for him, and when he spouted, radios carried his words from Argentina to Zanzibar.

The great man was wearing that simple soldier's uniform which he had put on at the outbreak of the war and had promised never to take off until victory was won. Of course he didn't mean that literally; he must have had at least two suits, for this one was neatly pressed and showed no traces of blood or sweat. He was always cordial to Lanny, shook hands with him and indicated a seat in front of the big fireplace with one of the Lenbach Bismarcks above it. "See what I am doing, *alter Herr*," you could imagine Adi saying, standing there and solemnly saluting the Iron Chancellor. "So much more than you were ever able to accomplish. Berlin to Bagdad!" There was a marble statue of Frederick the Great in the room; and it was no phantasy to imagine Adi communing with him. No, indeed. Adi was that theatrical kind of person, and certainly needed encouragement and counsel from some master strategist in the present days of perilous venture.

Hitler's complexion had always been pasty and his features pudgy, especially the nose. Now it appeared that he had gained in weight, and it was not healthy flesh. His expression showed heavy strain; he had always been a bad sleeper, sometimes keeping his friends and advisers up until daylight to save him from being alone with his own thoughts. Lanny wondered: was he, also, taking to the use of drugs? At any rate, he had no time for the smiles and gracious gestures with which he usually played the host. He began abruptly: "Rudi tells me you have news for me, Herr Budd. What is it?"

First it had been Number Three to hear that story, and then Number Two, and now it was Number One. This time Lanny went into even greater detail, for he knew that Adi was feminine in his attitude toward people; if he was hearing about someone, he wanted to see that person with his mind's eye and hear the tones of his voice. So Lanny took him to Admiral Darlan's office, and then to Laval's château, and then to the old Maréchal's combination home and office in the Hotel du Parc. He explained why the hero of Verdun was so

generally trusted by the French, and why the butcher's son was less trusted. He described life in a fashionable springs resort where the hotels had all been turned into government offices, and wealthy and elegant people were sleeping in any corner they could find. All bread was grey and tasteless, unless you could find a breadlegger.

And then to London. The Führer went in his imagination to visit the grey smoke-stained building of the Foreign Office, and the still older residence of the Prime Minister in Downing Street, which was both short and narrow, a dead-end way in which the Germans would have been ashamed to house any official. He described Churchill as he had watched him at Maxine Elliott's swimming-pool on the Riviera and in her great hall where every now and then all conversation had to stop while a train of the Mediterranean line roared by a few feet from the outside wall. He told about Lord Wickthorpe's resignation and what it meant; he took the Führer for a week-end visit to the Castle, where all the friends of his cause discussed what they were going to do about "Winnie." The Countess of Wickthorpe had once spent an evening at Berchtesgaden and listened to the Führer expound his programme, and had said to him: "I wish you to know that I agree with every word you have said." That night had been the end of the marriage of Irma Barnes and Lanny Budd, but of course the ex-husband didn't mention that detail in his narrative.

The Führer held in his hands the fate of both these countries, France and Britain—or at any rate so he believed. He plied his visitor with a stream of questions: what did this mean, and that, and what would happen if he, the master of Europe, took this course or that? Lanny's purpose in giving information was to get the master to talk in return, and therefore his answers were directed to the pleasing of this genius-madman risen from the slums of Vienna. Like all conquerors through the ages, he had fallen victim to his own surroundings, and had come to the state where he could absorb an unlimited amount of flattery and could not stand any trace of opposition. So Lanny told him that the French were rapidly adjusting themselves to *l'ordre nouveau*, and that the sane conservative elements in British public life were rapidly realizing what a blunder they had made in letting themselves be persuaded to "die for Danzig." Lanny called the roll of the leading "appeasers" with whom he had talked; some of them had had to bow to the storm but now were straightening their backs and lifting their heads again.

And then America! Westward the star of Nazi propaganda was taking its way. America was a much younger country than Britain, more crude, more chaotic. America meant a swarm of profiteers, blinded by a frenzy of greed, the chance to make money by the billions where formerly they had made it by the millions. Anyone who tried

to stand against this torrent was branded as a public enemy. Lanny described one by one the heroic men with whom he had discussed the situation: Senator Reynolds and Congressman Fish, Henry Ford and Father Coughlin, and above all, the publisher William Randolph Hearst, who had come to visit the Führer and had made such an excellent business deal. "There is my idea of a real American!" exclaimed the Führer, and the Führer's friend replied: "*Ja, wirklich!*" He went on to tell of the colossal influence the Hearst newspapers exerted in America—always, of course, against Roosevelt's devilish manoeuvres to involve us in the war.

"Have you met That Man?" inquired the Führer, and Lanny, always cautious, replied: "Only casually. The man has wild eyes and is subject to brainstorms; the kindest thing anybody can say about him is that his judgment is as feeble as his legs."

X

That led up to the "junta" plot; and of course Lanny was under no obligation to limit himself to the exact truth about it. He made it more widespread than it was, connecting it with all the country-club gentlemen, and with the crackpots up and down the land who were raving in public meetings and organizing groups with shirts of white and silver and gold and all other colours which Nazis and Fascists and Falangists had not pre-empted.

Never in his many interviews with the Führer had Lanny brought any news which gave his host such delight. Adi began to slap his thighs, which was one of his tricks when he was aroused; then he popped up from his seat and began to pace the room and orate. "*So ist's!* What I have been predicting from the beginning! Put that scoundrel out of the way once for all!"

He came back to his chair, and leaning toward his guest demanded: "When is this going to happen, Herr Budd?"

"*Leider, mein Fuhrer*, that is something I cannot guess. The men who plan such a drastic move will surely not talk about it freely. They have to wait for the psychological moment, sometime when the man has made a particularly obvious blunder."

"They should not wait too long! It is a calamity for the world that such a man is kept in power and allowed to prolong this cruel conflict. You must know that it would have been over long ago but for the encouragement your country has given the stubborn Churchill, and the planes they have sent, to be used in killing not merely our soldiers but our women and children in their beds."

"Indeed, Herr Reichskanzler, you don't have to point that out

to me. I am bowed with shame, and I hesitated to enter Germany this time, to face all my old friends here."

"Listen, Herr Budd." The Führer leaned even closer, and lowered his voice, as though, like everybody else in Germany, he feared the omnipresent Gestapo. "Is there not something we can do at once, without waiting for officials and captains of industry to make up their minds?"

"What do you have in mind, *mein Führer*?"

"Could we not find some way to get rid of that malignant man ourselves? I could find ten thousand young heroes, any one of whom would gladly give his life to save the Fatherland from the sufferings it now has to endure."

Lanny gazed into those deadly blue eyes, and he thought: "This is the real madman, and I have to be careful now." Aloud, he said: "It would be very difficult for a German to get anywhere near the White House now, *Exzellenz*."

"I could find one who has lived in America, one who speaks without any trace of accent."

"I doubt that very much," replied Lanny gravely. "One syllable wrong would cost him his life, and the lives of all those who helped him. But even supposing it were so, the President is very carefully guarded—that has been the task of what is called the Secret Service, and it is done with especial thoroughness now, in what they consider for all practical purposes to be wartime."

"That goes without saying," replied the Führer. "But there is always a weak spot to be found, a chink in every armour. And if we could get those two men, Roosevelt and Churchill, we should save the world from an unending horror." Lanny noted this extreme language, several times repeated, and realized that the war which Adolf Hitler had started was becoming too much for his nerves. A boob like Heinrich Jung could rejoice over a year and a half of marching and conquering, but Adi had a General Staff to warn him how dangerously he was extending his lines and exposing his flanks—one over the Balkans and the other away down in North Africa! Adi Schickl-gruber was beginning to weaken!

XI

A student of National-Socialist affairs shouldn't have been too much surprised by a proposal of murder. Lanny knew that Adolf Hitler had caused the killing of whole populations which stood in his way, and that two leading statesmen had been assassinated at his orders—a King of Yugoslavia, and a Premier of Austria. Premier Barthou of France was supposed to have been killed by Mussolini's

crowd, but Adi had undoubtedly sanctioned it. Even so, it was startling to have this technique of state-craft brought directly home to a peaceable art expert.

Realizing that he would have to step with caution, even as the bearer of such a secret, Lanny inquired: "Just what do you have in mind for me to do, *mein Führer*?"

"It is my idea that you might assist me, at least with information as to how such an agent should proceed. You know so many important persons in your country, surely you could get access to the White House."

"That is a very difficult thing to do under the circumstances existing, and especially for one who is known as the son of Robert Budd."

"You mean that your father is not in favour now, in view of what he is doing for the government?"

"My father has been one of the most aggressive of old-line Republicans; he has contributed or raised millions of dollars in the effort to defeat the New Deal; and Roosevelt is known to be an extremely vindictive man—he cherishes grudges like an elephant. So far as concerns the present, the Administration sees very little to be pleased with in my father's achievements. Government agents are snooping about the plant trying to find out why the plane has given so little satisfaction to the British, and why the new model is so unaccountably delayed. I won't say that my father is deliberately 'stalling'—he wouldn't admit that even to his son; when I asked him questions his reply was: 'The time will come when this government of dreamers will be glad that we kept some of our military secrets to ourselves.' I trust that you, Herr Reichskanzler, will consider this strictly between us, and not share it with even your most trusted advisers."

"Oh, surely, surely, Herr Budd. But it is most unfortunate that you cannot make any suggestions."

"I haven't meant to say quite that, Exzellenz. It is an extremely delicate matter, and one that I would have to think over with the utmost care."

"That is better! Will you let me have whatever ideas may occur to you?"

"That I will do. But I am afraid I should have to go to New York and Washington and sound out a number of persons. I would say that I was hoping to get some sort of government post, and wished to know what influence I could command. I should listen to a number of people talking about Roosevelt, in order to find someone who might be counted upon. It is a difficult matter getting into Germany, so I suggest that you give me some secret way of getting word to you."

That was what the duellists call a riposte. That was taking the burden that Adi had placed upon Lanny's shoulders and putting it back where it had come from. The Führer didn't dare meet his guest's eyes for fear of betraying the doubts in his soul. To cover the awkward moment, the guest went on, quickly: "Assign me a code name that I could use in case I have something important to suggest."

"Excellent idea," replied the other. "Will you choose a name?"

"It might be better if you would assign one, because you know the sort of name you employ."

"They are chosen quite at random. Who is your favourite German?" This was a point at which Lanny could venture a smile. "You know that without asking, *mein Führer*."

The great man smiled in return—who could have helped it? "I mean, among those of the past," he said.

"I suppose I would say Wagner," replied the tactful guest—choosing Adi's favourite among music masters.

"That, unfortunately, is too common a name. I have several in my service. We might choose one of his characters. Would you care to be Siegfried?"

"I wouldn't mind slaying the dragon," replied Lanny, "but I wouldn't relish the stab in the back, or the funeral pyre." He said it with a twinkle in his eyes.

"We are going to revise that legend, Herr Budd. Our young Nordic hero has been forewarned, and this time he will keep his face to the foe."

"*Herrlich, mein Führer!* And to whom shall I send the information if I get it?"

Once more the pains of doubt and uncertainty were apparent in the Führer's face. It was one thing to listen to the gossip of a plausible playboy from an enemy country, and another to entrust to him a vitally important secret of the Liaison Staff—or would it be Personnel Department B? Of course Hitler might give the name of some agent in Portugal or Spain, where he had hundreds, and where the American government couldn't get at them; but that would mean delays, and perhaps secret censorship—the Führer knew it was not safe to assume that foreign governments were *too* stupid, and it was hard for him to believe that the Americans would permit airmail letters to go to Portugal and Spain without being examined on the way.

Nothing venture, nothing have—and Adi Schicklgruber was one of those who were determined to have. Said he: "It happens that a personal friend of mine, Herr Hans Heffelfinger, is at present connected with our Embassy in Washington, and if you have anything to write me you can send it in his care. Put it in an inside envelope, and mark

the inner one 'Personal to the Führer.' That way it will come to me at once. You will remember the name?"

"It is engraved on the tablets of my memory, Exzellenz; and be sure that I will do my best, and as quickly as possible. One thing more: in case you should have a message to send me through Herr Heffelfinger, it might be well for you, too, to have a code name, so that I may be sure it is the real thing. Will you permit me to assign one to you?"

"*Mit Vergnügen, Herr Budd.*"

"Very well: you are Wotan, highest of the gods! You will remember the name?" Even in this august and irritable presence, a playboy could not entirely forget the habits of a lifetime!

XII

One other matter of importance had to be cleared up before Lanny offered to depart. He said: "*Mein Führer*, I explained to Rudi the importance of my being able to tell people your views and wishes as of the present hour. Wherever, in any land, I mention that I have talked with you, people crowd about and ask: 'What does he really mean? What does he want?'"

"I have told them with the utmost plainness in my speeches, Herr Budd."

"You have reminded me of that in the past; but in the so-called democratic world—which is really Jewish-plutocratic—nobody believes what any statesman says; they take it for granted that it is just so much hogwash. But when a man talks to a friend in private, that is a different matter. They assume that so busy a man as yourself wouldn't give time to a visiting art expert unless he was really a friend."

"In that, at least, they are correct, Herr Budd. Just what is the uncertainty that troubles their minds?"

"The question of your intentions toward their own countries. The British statesmen are intensely concerned to know your attitude toward their Empire. As for America, I do not go so much among the statesmen, for they are mostly low-grade politicians, or fanatics of the Roosevelt cabal; but I meet the really important industrialists, and one and all they ask: 'What does the Führer mean to do when he has conquered Russia?'"

"*Ach, so?* They think that I am going to conquer Russia for them?"

"To put it plainly, Exzellenz, they think you are going to conquer Russia for oil. I have not met anyone who has doubt on that point, and they consider me fatuous if I suggest otherwise."

"You might point out to them that I have developed several processes for making petrol from coal."

"Yes, of course; but those plants are exposed to long-distance bombers, and you have told us in a speech what wonders you could work if you had the oil and the minerals of the Ukraine. That is one of your communications that nobody has forgotten."

"And they think that I can conquer Russia?"

"On that, too, there is general agreement. All the military men with whom my father talks believe that you can achieve your purpose in six weeks—about twice as long as it took with Poland."

"And when do they expect me to oblige them, Herr Budd?"

"They agree that you intend to move in the latter part of June or early in July. They figure that you must allow yourself a greater margin of safety than you did in 1939."

"It is really remarkable, Herr Budd, how precisely they have laid out my programme for me. It might occur to such shrewd gentlemen to doubt whether I would be so eager to meet their wishes."

"Understand, *mein Führer*, I am not telling my ideas, but theirs. Apparently their view is that the Reds are nearer to you, and therefore a greater menace. The reports are that the Russians are doing everything in their power to thwart your wishes in Bulgaria, and now in Yugoslavia."

"That is true enough, Herr Budd. They are vermin, the scum of the earth; mad dogs who have been turned loose on our eastern border, to the delight of our foes and the dismay of all decent people!"

The conversation was detoured for a time, while Adi called the Bolsheviks all the bad names he could think of. He worried himself into one of his furies of eloquence; he slapped his thighs, and got up and paced the room, shouting as if he had all Germany for an audience. He declared that the Red leaders, the brains of the conspiracy, were Jewish swine, and he cited Marx and Lassalle and Kautsky and Liebknecht and Luxemburg and Trotsky to prove it. Then he raved about the Jews for a while: "Germany's misfortune," in the Nazi phrase.

Then, in the strange fashion which Lanny had noted on other occasions, the Führer suddenly turned off his rage as if with a spigot. "Enough of that, Herr Budd, I must be boring you. I have to keep myself reminded that I have other enemies besides Jewish-Bolshevism."

XIII

So then, quite calmly and cunningly, Adolf Hitler proceeded to discuss what he wanted his friend and secret agent to do. "Let us assume, Herr Budd, that I intend to take upon myself the burden of slaying

this dragon. Are those British aristocrats and plutocrats to go on trying to strangle and starve me, and shooting their poisoned arrows into my back?"

"My efforts, Exzellenz, have been devoted to making them realize this situation, and bringing an end to this fratricidal strife. But it is impossible to bring two sides together when neither will take a step. The British ask: 'What will the Führer do?' and the Führer asks: 'What will the British do?' and I cannot answer either. When I left you in Paris and resumed my travels, everybody wanted to know: 'Does he mean to go after Russia?' and I had to reply: 'I don't know; he didn't tell me.' Now everybody has become assured that you are going after Russia—even the Russians know it, I am told. What people ask now—hundreds of them, all the way from Vichy to Hollywood—is: 'When he has got Russia, is he going to be satisfied? Or is he going to use the resources of Russia to turn upon us?'"

"You must tell them, Herr Budd, that it depends entirely upon their attitude toward me. If they are bombing my cities, of course I shall bomb theirs."

"It is a deadlock—and who is going to make the first move to break it? You and Britain are tied up in a net of mutual fears and suspicions, and they want to get out of it just as much as you do. I, an American, want to help, before that madman in the White House has managed to draw us in. I expect to travel to London by way of Lisbon. I shall be at Wickthorpe Castle for a couple of weeks because my little daughter, Irma's child, is there. I shall meet Gerald Albany and others of the Foreign Office. There will be several of those noble lords who have been your devoted friends. They will come, the moment the word spreads that there is a chap who has talked with the Führer face to face. You can't imagine what an impression that produces—people won't let me go to bed at night; they ask to go with me even when I take a walk. And right now is the critical time; the country is sick of the bloodshed, the food is growing scarce, the ships are going to the bottom, several of them every night——"

"They are beginning to feel the pinch, then!"

"They are in a desperate plight; and everywhere the governing classes are asking: 'Why, *why* do we have to fight this man who ought to be our friend? Why can't we have a truce, and let him go after the real enemy of our civilization?' Honestly, I do not exaggerate when I say, it might be the turning point—it might be just enough to cause the Conservative party leaders to get together and send you a secret emissary."

"You want me to say that I'll be satisfied with what I can get in Russia, and that I have no designs upon the British Empire, now or at any time?"

"I don't *want* you to say anything, *mein Führer*; that is not the correct way to put the matter. It would be preposterous for me to make suggestions to a master of diplomacy like yourself. What I am doing as an act of friendship is to lay a set of facts before you. It is for you to examine them and make your own decision, and tell me what I am to say."

"*Ja, ja, Herr Budd*. You may quote me as having said what I have just spoken, and say that I am ready to deal with any Englishman, anywhere, on that basis."

"You won't change your mind, *lieber Freund*? I mean, when your agents in Britain report to you that I have been saying this in London drawing-rooms, you won't feel that I have been betraying a confidence or committing a presumption?"

"*Ausgeschlossen!* I am a man of my word, and what you have done here is to voice my own thoughts with competence and understanding."

"*Besten Dank, Exzellenz!* I have never had a pleasanter compliment in all my life!"

XIV

The master of Europe was so pleased with a gracious friend and unpaid messenger that he invited him to remain for lunch, and took him for a tour of this building which had been designed by the greatest architect in the world and was intended to be the dwelling place of his successors for a thousand years. The visitor was escorted to the enormous drawing-room, built upon two levels so that part could serve as a stage. As an art expert he was impressed by the ancient tapestries which covered one entire wall. He was interested also in the story of the deep and heavy carpet which covered the floor of this apartment; it had been ordered by the League of Nations, but the funds of that treacherous organization had dried up and it couldn't pay for the treasure, so the Führer had taken it over!

The guest was shown the "green salon," and other great rooms of which he was not told the names. He inspected immense fireplaces, and the portraits of Prussian generals, also of Teutonic heroes who might have been brought from Bayreuth. He saw a winter garden with red lacquered furniture and tall rubber trees and other tropical plants, some of them in bloom. He was taken through the billiard room, and the lounge which was for the use of the *Leibstandarte*, those tall, green-uniformed young Nordics who swarmed over the place, and whose joy in life it was to throw up their right arms stiffly and shout: "*Heil Hitler!*" The Führer never once failed to respond, and

never once did it occur to him that an American might find anything comical in this noisy sort of home life. Even in the kitchen—a magnificent apartment straight out of a Hollywood movie—the group of cooks and scullery maids in snow-white costumes flung up their arms and vociferated their greetings.

The dining-room made Lanny think of the council chamber in the *Braune Haus* of Munich—it had the same sort of red leather chairs with brass nails, a red carpet and cream-coloured walls. Over the huge buffet was an appetizing subject, *The Feast of Bacchus* by Moritz von Schwindt. There were niches containing golden-bronze statues of Adam and Eve, with special lighting effects. The table seated twenty or more; the American guest was placed in the seat of honour, and at his right sat that young doctor who had gossiped with him about events at Berchtesgaden in the days of Schuschnigg and the *Anschluss*. All the Führer's staff were young, and all the female members had to be Nordic divinities. At the foot of the table sat Herr Kannenberg, the roly-poly Bavarian who ran the great man's household wherever he was. Good humour oozed from the ex-Kellner like sweat.

Nearly everybody at this luncheon knew the son of Budd-Erling, and excepted him from the hatred they bore for Americans. He was honoured with a steaming hot plate of the inescapable noodle soup, a vegetable plate and poached egg like the Führer's, and a stein of the Führer's specially brewed near-beer. The great man was fond of sweets, and had a pot of honey which he passed to his guest but to no one else. He beamed his favour, displaying his abnormally small teeth liberally studded with gold fillings. His prominent blue eyes gleamed as he chatted about the cast of *The Merry Widow* which he had attended the previous night; then about the half-dozen Spitzwegs which he had installed in his Munich residence. Lanny wondered why a slightly satirical painter of the Bavarian middle classes should have appealed to the master of Europe; he guessed it must be part of the master's efforts to look down upon his recent past.

Lanny wondered if Herr Kannenberg would play the accordion after this vegetarian repast. It might have been intended; but as they rose from the table Hitler espied a minor *Beamter* whom he had summoned and who was waiting in an ante-room. The Führer strode toward him and burst into one of those tirades of which Lanny had several times been a reluctant witness. The wretch turned a yellowish green and his knees almost gave way beneath him as a torrent of the foulest words in the Austrian dialect poured over him—also a fine spray of saliva. The Führer's face became distorted and his nostrils flared to an extraordinary width. Strangest of all was the way the storm passed; Hitler would turn sharply on his heel, and behave like an actor who has finished a scene in rehearsal; his features became

composed in an instant, and he did not consider it necessary to apologize, or to make any comment upon the startling episode.

To Lanny he held out his hand, saying: "*Leben Sie wohl, Herr Budd.* I hope to hear good news from you." The American went out from the presence, wondering with a mixture of awe and disgust if that was how Europe was destined to be governed for the next thousand years. It seemed so at this hour.

14

The Best-Laid Schemes

I

WHEN Lanny got back to his hotel he found a note from Hess, inviting him to spend the night at the latter's home in the suburbs. The guest was called for in a bullet-proof car with swastikas on the doors, and on the military chauffeur. Lanny had visited the house before, and had met Frau Hess, tall, severe-looking, deep voiced; she found no incompatibility between National-Socialist *Mystik* and that of the *Vedanta*. Lanny had won her regard by telling her about the ideas of Parsifal Dingle and his communicating with the monks of Dodanduwa, both living and dead. Now he brought his report up-to-date, and at the same time speculated about this seeming-odd marriage. Could it be true, as the gossip-princess Hilde declared, that the Führer had commanded this match as a means of putting an end to the rumours concerning improper relationship between himself and his devoted man secretary, co-author of *Mein Kampf*?

"Out there we shall be safe from the bombs," Rudi had said in his note. But there were no bombs on Berlin that night, and had not been for three or four nights. The R.A.F. was tapering off, and *Deutschlandsender*, the propaganda radio of the Nazis, exulted that the foe had found the price too high. Hess, more realistic, said that the nights were getting shorter, and the British planes could no longer come and go in complete darkness. He questioned Lanny about what the American army was managing to achieve in the technique of daylight bombing which they were practising. Had the visitor heard of the Norden bomb sight? Lanny said that it was the most closely guarded of all secrets, and not even his father knew the principle on which it worked.

Lanny had taken it for granted that the Number Three's purpose in

inviting him here was to find out what the Führer had said; but he discovered that in this he had misjudged the former secretary and most loyal of friends. What Rudi learned, he would learn from his Chief, and would never put himself in the position of trying to go behind his Chief's back. He did not mention the bright idea of having the President of the United States assassinated. His thoughts were centred upon the coming struggle with the Reds, and the urgent necessity of getting out of the war with Britain before that attack started.

Had the Führer told him that Lanny was permitted to know about the coming move? Anyhow, the Deputy no longer made any pretence that it was a secret. April had arrived, and the Wehrmacht was driving gloriously into the mountainous land of Greece, routing not merely those troops which had soundly beaten the Italians but a couple of divisions of British troops who had been sent from North Africa to their aid. "Not many of those chaps are going to get away alive," declared Hess; "and as soon as we finish that clean-up, we shall begin moving our troops to the Ukraine. The Russians will know it then if they don't know it already."

"Everybody that I talk to seems to know it," was the P.A.'s reply. "Doubtless the Reds are doing everything they can to get ready, but it won't be enough."

"They are a worse mess than the Italians," was the Reichsminister's opinion. "On that score I have no worry whatever. But I am deeply concerned about the continuing struggle with Britain, and it seems to me we should at any cost get it over before we embark on a new venture. It has been a basic principle of our strategy, never to let ourselves be involved in a two-front war."

"The consequences were convincing last time," replied Lanny.

"I am pleading with the Führer that we must not commit that blunder again. He agrees to the extent of authorizing me to do anything, absolutely anything, that will avoid the calamity."

"You have done a good job of converting him. He has asked me to talk to the top people and report if I make any headway."

"I beg you, Lanny, do not fail us. The thing has become an obsession with me; I cannot sleep for worrying about it. I get no pleasure whatever in the triumphs our airmen win over Britain. I feel as if it were my own property which is being destroyed."

"You have described my own attitude, Rudi. I go back and forth between the two countries, and they seem to me so nearly the same. They are the two peoples whom I trust. Why must they waste their energies in destroying each other?"

The Deputy Führer leaned towards his guest, his grey-green eyes seeming to shine and his bushy black eyebrows to bristle with excitement. "Lanny, we must, we *must* find a way to persuade them to be

friends, and at least to get off our backs, even if they will not help us. We must not lose a day."

"I am willing to leave to-morrow," was the P.A.'s reply. "The Führer has armed me with powerful weapons, and I am eager to try them out."

II

That was all on the subject for a time. Lanny told about some psychic wonders, made up as he went along. This had the effect of putting Rudi into a warm mood, and after they had a snack before bedtime, he suddenly opened up: "Lanny, I am going to take you into my confidence about a really important matter. I had a communication this morning from one of my agents in London. You understand, we have some there."

Lanny smiled. "I have probably met some of them, but they were well camouflaged."

"I am informed that a leading English industrialist, one of their top men, has consented to meet me in Madrid and talk matters over. Unfortunately I am under pledge not to give his name."

"That's all right; I'll probably be told all about him within an hour after I reach London."

"That won't do any harm, so long as it is they who reveal it. It is an important sign, and I want to make the most of it. Tell me, how do you plan to travel?"

"I came by way of Switzerland, and I'll return there and make inquiries as to getting to Lisbon. From there it will be easy, as my father has a firm of solicitors in London who seem able to pull wires."

"All that will take some time, and it occurred to me that you might like to fly with me to Madrid, and be there to advise me about this man, and perhaps to meet him."

"That is very kind indeed, Rudi, and ordinarily I should be delighted. But it occurs to me—Spain is a land of intrigue, and everybody there is watched. If I arrived with the Führer's Deputy, it would be all over town in an hour."

"I am planning a secret trip. I expect to be smuggled out of the airport and into a palace. If there is any rumour that I am in Madrid, it will be officially denied."

"I doubt if you can manage it; and anyhow, I couldn't. There are a couple of newspapermen at the Adlon whom I used to know, and I have had to dodge them. I've an idea they have their eye on me and may be trying to find out what I'm here for. If they get the tip that I have flown to Madrid in a Luftwaffe plane—with or without

the Führer's Deputy—they would cable it. As you know, my usefulness depends upon my being taken for an art expert and not as anybody's agent."

"What can you suggest?"

"Say that I pay my bill at the Adlon and drive off in a taxi. Then I get out and walk, and pick up another taxi to one of the lesser airfields. You have commercial planes flying to Paris, and I step aboard one of them. Paris is a disorderly place—not even your army can change that. I am a frequent visitor there, and nobody is going to be surprised to see me. If I say I'm on my way to London, it will be natural for me to take a commercial plane to Madrid. When do you expect your Englishman?"

"Not until next week."

"Very well, then, that does it. Tell me how I can get in touch with you in Madrid, and how I can write if anything turns up."

"Ask for Herr Knapp at our Embassy. The Führer has told me you are to be Siegfried and he is Wotan. Perhaps you had better give me a code name, so that if I communicate with you, you can be sure it is genuine."

The *Nummer Drei* Nazi said this without the trace of a smile; but the wicked Lanny Budd had a thought which it was hard for him to conceal. The enemies of Rudolf Hess had given him a malicious nickname, *Das Fräulein*; now Lanny thought with malice: You shall be Freya! But this was no time for joking, even in one's thoughts. The secret agent suggested: "Since we have gone Wagnerian, you may be Kurvenal. You remember, in *Tristan—der Treueste der Treuen*." The truest of the true!

"Thank you for the compliment, Lanny. And one thing more—I know that you will be put to expense in this matter, and it's only decent that you should be reimbursed."

"No, no, Rudi, I don't want any money. I have no trouble in earning what I need—it's fun for me. If I take money from any government, I am committing myself, and sooner or later I'm bound to get brand-marked."

"Never by me! I can put American money into your hands, and nobody but you and I will ever know it has happened."

"I take your word for it, but truly, I don't want it. Think of me as a disinterested friend of your country and mine. Some day, perhaps, Göring will make me the curator of that super-museum he plans to establish. Meantime, here is a favour you may do me. I am buying a couple of small paintings which I can conveniently carry out, and the commission on the deals will pay all my expenses. I don't know whether I need a permit to take them out, but if so you can have your office obtain it for me, along with the exit permit. And get me a

permit, if any is required, to have my New York bank cable me ten thousand dollars."

"All that will be simple," declared the man of power, making a memo in a little book. "And pray understand: if you find any way by which you can use money to advance the cause we have in mind, don't hesitate to spend it and let me reimburse you. I have a secret fund, and there is nothing I'd rather use it for. As you Americans say, the sky is the limit!"

III

The American guest was landed at Le Bourget airfield, but did not let himself be driven into Paris in a German staff car; he just took his two suitcases, one in each hand, his portable typewriter under one arm and a roll of paintings under the other—a most uncomfortable load—and started to walk. He seated himself by the roadside, and presently along came a peasant cart, in which, for the sum of fifty francs, he got the privilege of riding into "*la ville sans lumière*." It took most of the day, but he didn't mind, for he had a chance to get acquainted with a French market gardener, and to ask many questions as to what the German occupation meant to the peasants. "*Pas si mal*," was the old fellow's verdict; at least so far as concerned himself, who was over the draft age. For his two sons it was another matter, for they were prisoners in Germany, and *les boches* kept promising to release them but never did; the French were kept dangling on a string, just to shake more and more out of their pockets.

This weather-beaten old labourer possessed a shrewd understanding of the economic situation. The peasants had the land, and the people in the cities, Germans as well as French, had to have their products. Therefore prices were high, and if you were a shrewd bargainer you could bid them still higher. It was a situation as old as Europe, in wartime the people of the cities suffered, and the country people lived on—unless, of course, they had the hard luck to live on or near a battlefield. Civilization had survived by grace of the fact that battlefields were relatively small, and the marching hordes kept mainly to the highways.

The traveller put up at one of the smaller hotels, the larger ones being occupied by the Germans; their uniforms were a common sight, and the French had learned to get along with them, though many women ostentatiously turned their backs when the hated foe passed. By the ingenious device of paper francs the Germans had pretty well cleaned out France, both Occupied and Unoccupied, and food was now strictly rationed. The Parisians were allowed less than a pound

of meat per week, and bread, their principal food, was of poor quality; the ration was being reduced almost every month. Ersatz foods, a German device, were coming in. Acorns, nettles, and other garden weeds were being chemically treated to make them edible, and you had "mink butter," made of tallow and chemicals. "Coffee" was roasted oats and barley; so no wonder the people of Paris were dropping their practice of two hours for lunch. "Back to work!" was the Nazi slogan.

IV

Lanny's first call was upon an old friend who had at one time been a munition-maker. He was broken in health and in spirit, and Lanny's first thought was that he was not long for this world. How futile had been all his efforts and how vain his hopes of "collaboration" to save the two hundred families of France! The sons of these families were many of them prisoners in Germany, or had fled to Vichy or North Africa. The older people for the most part had stayed, and were pathetically trying to keep up social life in spite of constantly increasing handicaps. Foreigners they saw hardly ever, so Lanny rated a dinner party of the old solemn stately sort—a very good dinner, revealing the fact that there was a black market in Paris, maintained by passing bribes to the Nazis, something by no means difficult.

Here came the masters of the Comité des Forges, of steel and coal and electrical power, the physical resources of France; masters also of that imaginary force which men had created and which they called money, without which nothing else could operate. They all knew Lanny Budd; they had questioned him concerning the German Führer and his purposes, and time and events had shown that what he told them was correct. Now they had a hundred questions, and Lanny repeated what the Nazis One, Two, and Three had authorized him to say. The masters of France found it agreeable, for there was nothing in this world they wanted so much as the overthrow of the Red menace in the east. If there was a single one among them who had any doubt as to the ultimate victory of the Wehrmacht in this war, he did not raise his voice. They considered that Britain was committing suicide at Churchill's blind behest, and they talked about Roosevelt precisely as the gentlemen of the Newcastle Country Club had done in the days before the fall of Paris had scared them.

Really the gentlemen of the Comité des Forges weren't doing so badly under the occupation, and they explained it to an American visitor so that he might explain it at home. To be sure, the Germans had insisted upon having a majority interest in most of the prime

industries; but then, they had paid the market prices and their cheques had been good, so how could you object? Ever since Adolf Hitler's so-called Beerhall Putsch had failed so miserably, he had had a "passion for legality," and everything he had done had complied with the formalities of the capitalist system. It was a world of paper titles, and never would the "Economic Mobile Units" which had followed on the heels of the German armies take anything without giving a proper receipt and acquiring a certificate of title with engraved scroll-work and red or gold seals. Truly it was a comical thing to see the shrewd moneymasters of France hypnotized by these devices which they themselves or their forefathers had invented!

"What is it that a large employer wants?" demanded the head of the great electrical industry of France. "He wants to keep his plants busy, and to be able to sell his product at a profit which will enable him to meet his payroll at the end of every week. He wants to know that his workers will obey orders; that there will be no agitators stirring them up and plaguing him with strikes. All those things we have, M. Budd."

"Aren't you troubled with sabotage?" inquired the visitor, and the answer was: "Some; but the Germans know how to deal with it. When the war is over, and the population has reconciled itself to the new situation, I see no reason why we should not enjoy a long period of prosperity."

This gentleman volunteered to deliver Lanny to his hotel after the party broke up. He had an elegant Mercedes, and apparently enough *essence*. On the way Lanny commented upon the depressed appearance of their host, and the reply was: "I think that what has broken Eugène's spirit is the fact that the Germans told him his plant is hopelessly out-of-date!"

One other errand in Paris. Lanny had the address of Julie Palma, which Raoul had given him a year ago. It was in one of those factory districts which surrounded Paris with a dingy ring. Lanny had no idea whether she would still be there, but it could do no harm to try. He wrote a note on his typewriter, signing the name "Bienvenu." He suggested a rendezvous on a street corner, something he had done on previous occasions; it was comparatively safe, because it would be misunderstood by all the rest of the world.

He went walking, which he enjoyed, and which now was *de rigueur*. What was Paris like under the "occupation"? Well, for one thing, there were long queues, the same as in London and Berlin. The housewife who wanted food had to spend half her time waiting—perhaps

only to learn that the day's supply had been sold out. For another, the newspapers in the kiosks were all *g eichgeschaltet*; they all sang German tunes, and so, for the most part, did performers in the music halls; "Lili Marlene" was the favourite of the moment, and, oddly enough, the British in North Africa had taken it up from their prisoners. Another detail, the streets of Paris had been made moral—at any rate in name. There was no longer a *rue Zola* or a *rue Renan*, both these men having been Freemasons, a vile thing.

At the appointed corner, there was the little Frenchwoman who was Raoul's devoted wife, and who had helped to run a workers' school through all the dissensions and "splits" which had paralleled those of the world outside. All through the Spanish war she had carried the burden alone, and now she had joined the underground, living the life of an outlaw, hiding in a crowded city instead of in a forest or a mountain cave. Just what she was doing Lanny had never asked, not even in the three Spanish years. This period, which the Nazi-Fascists had used for training in depredation, the rebel workers had used for training in silence and concealment.

Members of the underground did not walk up to one another and exchange greetings on the street. One walked and the other followed at a discreet distance; they turned several corners and watched to make sure they were not being trailed. Then, perhaps, the leader would slip into a doorway or an alley; or go out into a park, where it was possible to talk with a certainty of not being overheard. Since Lanny was not known in the working-class districts of Paris, it was all right for this pair to stroll on unfrequented streets. A well-dressed and well-fed gentleman and a poorly dressed and ill-nourished woman—that was a pattern all too familiar on the streets of the great capitals. Nobody would be curious about where they went or try to overhear their low-spoken words.

Julie said: "You caught me just in time. I have a way to get to Raoul, and I was about to leave."

Lanny didn't say: "Where is he?" That wouldn't have been playing the game. He asked: "Have you heard from him?"—and the reply was: "There was one sentence in his letter which I assume refers to you. He said: 'If you should see our friend, tell him the money got to the right place.' Do you recognize that?"

"There is a story behind it," replied the man. "Is that all he said?"

"His notes are brief. They have to be smuggled past the border, you know."

"There is no reason why you shouldn't know what happened. Raoul probably knows it by now, and if not, you can tell him."

He recited the story of his misadventure in Toulon, and Julie listened with a look of horror on her face. "Oh, Lanny, what a

dreadful thing to have happened to you! I am so sorry—and ashamed!"

"It was rather disagreeable at the time, but now when I look back on it I can see the humorous aspects. I was asking for it, you know. I'll surely be more careful in future."

"I think I know who the leader of that group was," said the woman. "It would not be proper for me to name him."

"His voice seemed familiar, but I have searched my memory in vain. I think he was probably at the school."

"If he is the man I think he is, there is a price of two hundred thousand francs on his head. He is bold, and a man of intense convictions; the last time I saw him he was a Trotskyite—he's a revolutionist who does not believe it possible to have Socialism in one country alone, or excusable to make deals with the Nazis."

"I know the type," replied Lanny, "and you have given me a clue. I'll recall the arguments I listened to at the school, and bring back to mind the different individuals who advanced them. Ten or fifteen years ago, I imagine, my captor would have been a shrill-voiced and bitter youth."

"In those days it was all talk," said the woman. "But now is the time for action—and many, *hélas*, have reconsidered and decided that it is the part of wisdom to look out for themselves."

VI

The P.A. was not free to reveal what he himself was doing, except in general terms; but Julie wanted him to know about her movement, which so needed help from outside. Defeat and humiliation had served to separate the sheep from the goats in France: those who wanted freedom and were willing to fight for it from those who thought only of comfort and the protection of their property. The forces of resistance were organizing in little groups here and there. "My chief is a man who would not dare to be seen on the street by daylight," said Julie, "but there are a hundred doors he can knock on and be safely hidden. Have you seen any of our papers?"

"No," was the reply, "I wouldn't dare ask for one."

"I didn't dare bring one. Ours is called *Libération*, and there is another called *Combat*. We tell the news we get over the British radio, and we tell the workers how to practise the slowdown, and how to sabotage. Most important of all is the keeping up of morale. The working-class districts of Paris are solidly for us, and when the British bomb our factories and sometimes hit our homes there is little complaint. '*C'est la guerre*,' they say."

"What do you need, Julie?"

"Arms, above all else. The British smuggle some across the Channel, and drop them by parachutes in the northern areas, but it is only a trickle and it should be a flood. We need money, too—French money."

"I have brought you a little." He took out a roll of miscellaneous banknotes which he had been collecting, not without difficulty. "I am relieved to know that Raoul got the fifty thousand francs I tried to take to him. It was a funny method of delivery."

"I should say that is an American way to look at it," responded the woman. "For me, it will be a cause of bad dreams for many a night."

"I will tell you something to cheer you up. Hitler is going to attack Russia in June."

"Oh, *mon Dieu*! Can that really be true?"

"Take my word for it. July is the latest date."

"And may we say that in our paper?"

"Surely, but you had better wait a week or two, so that it will not coincide with my arrival in Paris. Say that you got it from papers stolen from a German officer. Say that the Wehrmacht is now being mobilized on the eastern front, and that as soon as the conquest of Greece is completed, the troops there will be shifted to the Ukraine."

"That will mean a tremendous increase of strength to us, Lanny. The Communists were powerful in France before the war, and such an attack will set them to work like a swarm of hornets."

"If you can convince them, they can start swarming two months earlier. Tell them that the top Nazis are trying desperately to persuade the British to lay off, so that Germany may be free to attack Russia. But they will not get what they are asking for."

"Oh, I hope you are right, Lanny! And thank you as ever. When do you expect to be back in France?"

"I cannot say exactly, but I should guess about midsummer. Address me at *Bienvenu*, as usual; but don't ask me to come to Toulon!"

"God forbid!" exclaimed the woman of the underground.

VII

Two years had passed since the great city of Madrid had yielded to Generalissimo Franco's troops, but a visitor looked in vain for any signs of restoration. Buildings which had been wrecked remained as they were, and stucco which had been chipped by bullets was pock-marked. In the Hotel Ritz, where Lanny put up, the hot water ran

lukewarm and stained with rust. In the dining-room you could have a meal of fish or meat cooked in the very best Spanish style, provided that you had twenty dollars to pay for it. Outside, in the narrow, ill-smelling streets, people were fainting from starvation, and an average of two every hour were committing suicide. Jails and concentration camps were jammed with half-starved prisoners, and the problem of food scarcity was solved by taking batches of them out every night and shooting them in the courtyards. In short, it was Spain—pious and incompetent, Catholic and cruel, medieval Spain. Its regime was hated by all the workers and most of the peasants, by the intelligentsia and the middle classes; it was imposed upon the country by the military, with the help of German Nazis, Italian Fascists, Moors, aristocracy, and Holy Mother Church.

Some four years ago Lanny had met General Aguilar in Seville, and had impressed that pious killer with his understanding of and sympathy for the "Nationalist" cause. Now the General was the military commander of the capital, and Lanny called upon him and exhibited his intellectual wares with the usual good results; the elderly aristocrat with silvery moustaches and a chest covered with medals invited him to his home and compelled him to drink a dangerous number of *copitas de manzanilla*. Word spread quickly in the right circles that there was an American gentleman, *digno de aceptación*, who had just come from Berlin, and had previously been in Vichy, London, New York, and Hollywood. The P.A. was taken up and invited about, and no longer had to buy his meals at ruinous prices.

There had always been a colony of Spaniards on the French Riviera, in exile from one regime or another. Lanny had known them as a proud and touchy people, inclined toward melancholy, even moroseness. Perhaps that was to be expected of exiles; and now it seemed that the whole of Spain was in exile at home. Nobody was happy, even when they were drunk; the most elaborate dinner party, even with music and dancing, could not produce any gaiety. And everybody was ready to tell a visiting stranger the reason for it. A few madmen in Spain wanted more war, and all the rest were afraid that the forces which were wrecking the modern world were going to drag this tortured land into their vortex.

Such was the attitude of everybody whom Lanny met, even the government people, even the military. Spain had no food, Spain had no transportation, and how could she take part in a war? Spain was dependent upon outsiders for so many things—and especially oil, without which she could not move a wheel. How then could she fight countries which were in position to blockade her ports and destroy the few ships she had left? That much even General Aguilar would say; and his daughter, wife of one of the city's leading bankers, low-

ered her voice and exclaimed: "We are in the hands of irresponsible elements! We are the pawns of propaganda!"

You could make sure of it by looking at the newspapers on the stands. The Germans had begun a huge campaign for Spanish participation, and Lanny had seen enough in other cities to know how they must be pouring out money. When bands of hoodlums who called themselves the Falange and presumed to run the affairs of the country were parading the streets waving banners and shouting for blood, Lanny knew that money and cigarettes and arms were being distributed for the asking. There were rumours all over town that the British were preparing for a landing, to use Spain as a base to attack Hitler, as they had done with Napoleon nearly a century and a half ago. Lanny didn't have to be told that it was agents of the Gestapo who were circulating such reports. Hilde von Donnerstein had told him how they were practising this same technique in Berlin, where the story was that all Germans in the United States were forced to wear black swastikas on their left breasts, and that the persecution of Jews in Germany was in reprisal for the persecution of Germans by the Jew-dominated governments of New York and Washington.

VIII

It was a P.A.'s job to find out about these matters, and if and where and when the Führer expected to strike through Spain. From General Aguilar he learned that new motor highways were being built in the direction of Gibraltar, and great fortifications were under construction facing the Rock; not even the peasants were permitted to use the side roads in that district. No doubt the British knew about such activities, but F.D.R. would be interested to have the reports confirmed. Everybody seemed to agree that there could be no move until the harvests were in, and that, too, was important. Meantime, remarked the elderly General, the troops would be busy with another attempt to put down the rebels who were still hiding in the Guadarrama mountains, less than an hour's drive from the capital. Also, his secret service would be occupied in trying to nab those Communists who, incredible as it might seem, were managing to publish a weekly paper in the heart of the city.

Admiral Darlan came to Madrid at this juncture, and when he learned that Lanny had been in Berlin he invited him to lunch. Lanny told him enough of what Hitler and Göring and Hess had said to cheer the old seadog and make him certain that his Nazi friends were going to win the war; then he talked freely about the proposed seizure of Gibraltar, dreaded by him because the armies would have to move

through Vichy France. Marshal Pétain had proposed to come to Madrid to consult with Franco, whom he knew well and greatly admired; but the Führer had not trusted the old gentleman and had forbidden the visit. Thereupon Madame Pétain had come, with a military staff—which was something of a joke, considering that women had never voted in France and that their part in government had been confined to the drawing-room and the bedchamber. The Admiral chuckled as he told this story, and his guest laughed as any man would.

Also, Juan March happened to be in town; he travelled freely from Spain into France and from Spain into Britain; he was the sort of person whom embassies and consulates approve. He had got the tobacco monopoly of Spain; this and other privileges had made him the richest man in the land. It was well known that he had put up the money for Franco's coup, so now he could have anything he wanted if it was Franco's to give. But, alas, there was so much that wasn't in Franco's possession! Peace, for example, and security! Señor Juan was one of those Jews from the Balearic Isles whom the Spanish call *Xuetas*, and do not think of them as Jews, precisely, but as "descendants of Jews." But now the Nazi wave was spreading into Spain, and how could an ex-smuggler be certain that they would take the same attitude? Señor Juan was well on in years.

Also, the Germans were bad for business, Spanish business; they wanted it all to themselves. Señor Juan had just been to London, where he had formed a company with a nominal capital of a hundred thousand pounds to promote trade between Britain and Spain; but what could you do when Hitler was taking everything out of the country? The *Xueta* had suggested to General Franco a wonderful scheme for making cheap motor cars for the people of Spain, and Franco had thought well of it, but Hitler had not; he had pointed out that as soon as the war was won, Germany would be in position to make all the cars the Spanish people might want, and Germany would be wanting oranges and olive oil, cork and copper and mercury and other Spanish products in exchange. "He wants us to be a colony," said Señor Juan. Ordinarily he was a close-mouthed man, but he had known Lanny for some time and had learned the same lesson that Lanny had learned, that if you want somebody to tell you things you must begin by telling *him* things. A heavy-set, round-faced man, his complexion was so grey that it made you think of rubber. A large and melancholy rubber doll, overinflated, and afraid that somebody might stick a pin into him!

This tobacco king knew all about the projected invasion of Russia, and didn't mind discussing it. Serrano Suñer, Franco's brother-in-law and Spain's Foreign Minister, had made a deal with the Nazis, pledg-

ing his country to raise a million volunteers to fight the Reds. "They will be the same sort of 'volunteers' as the Führer and Il Duce sent to us," remarked Señor Juan glumly, and Lanny said: "That won't be very popular with the Spanish people, will it?" The reply was: "It will start the civil war all over again." The visitor gathered that his host didn't think much of Suñer, who was the most ardent of *Falangistas* and a reckless talker.

"By the way," said the Señor, "I mentioned to the Generalissimo your point that the word ought to be *Falangita*, because the *falangista* is a small tree-climbing animal of Tasmania."

"And what did he reply, Señor?"

"He said that nobody in the Party had ever heard of Tasmania, so it wouldn't matter!"

IX

A stout middle-aged German gentleman in what they call a "tourist's" costume came to Lanny's hotel and addressed him in precise English: "I have a message for you, Mister Budd." Lanny took the note, and with an apology, opened it and read: "I want to see you. Kurvenal." Lanny said: "Thank you. How shall I go?" The answer was: "We have a car, just around the corner. Be so good as to follow me at a little distance." So Lanny strolled out, and got into the car. They didn't offer to blindfold him, but drove him to one of the great mansions near the Palacio Real and took him in by a side door.

There was Rudi, in a pepper-and-salt civilian suit, the first time the American had seen him out of uniform. He started up, exclaiming: "Hello, Lanny!" And then, abruptly: "That damned Englishman hasn't come! I've been waiting here for two days."

"Too bad," responded Lanny. "I can't say anything, not knowing who he is."

"I'll tell you, if you'll promise not to pass it on."

"Of course not, Rudi."

"Lord Beaverbrook."

"The devil you say!"

"That surprises you, no doubt."

"If he has changed his mind about Germany and the war, you have certainly made a great conquest. But how could you imagine that the Beaver could come to Madrid and have it a secret? Everybody knows him."

"He could be here but not have it known that he was meeting any Germans. The British have any number of agents here."

There was a pause. Lanny waited, feeling sure that more was to come. "Sit down," said the Deputy, and drew a chair close. "Old man," he began in a low voice, "I need help badly. I am going to take you into my confidence, if you will let me."

"Surely, Rudi. Anything that I can do."

"I count upon our long friendship. This is ultra-secret; there is no telling how important it may be."

"You have my solemn word."

"I wonder if you know about 'The Link.'"

"I have a vague impression of it."

"The secret has been well kept. It is a group of Englishmen who are working for friendship with us. You probably know some of them; I have been in correspondence with one or two for more than a year."

"That is indeed important. This date with the Beaver is the outcome?"

"A part of it. I wish I could tell you all." Rudi wrote a name on a piece of paper and handed it to Lanny remarking "Do you know him?"

"I have met him once or twice at social affairs. I can't say that I really know him."

"He is the one who arranged this date. His letters have been so encouraging—I really thought the deal was going through. Won't you see him in London for me and find out what the devil has gone wrong?"

"Why, of course, Rudi. But how shall I reach you?"

"I will have a man call upon you in London. He will say: 'I am from Kurvenal,' and you can give him any information you have got."

"You are asking me to take a considerable risk, but the matter is so important that I don't mind. Wouldn't it save time if I were to see the Beaver and find out just what has happened? I met him several times on the Riviera, and I'm fairly sure he'll remember me."

"That is good of you, Lanny. Damn it! I am in a state of exasperation. You know how it is when you wait and wait for something. The Führer was pretty sure I wouldn't get it."

"That makes it worse," agreed Lanny sympathetically.

"He doesn't trust the British; he doesn't trust any foreigners—excepting you, Lanny." This was an obvious afterthought, a courtesy. Lanny's feelings weren't hurt, for he had had no idea that the Führer trusted him, except when it was necessary in order to get something the Führer wanted.

The Deputy was in that position now. He wanted something quite

frantically, so much so that he got up and paced the floor like a wild creature in a cage. If Lanny had been a less cautious secret agent he might have suggested that Rudi should tell him what he wanted said to the British newspaper proprietor. But Lanny was sure that if he waited, Rudi would have to tell him; and it was better never to display the least curiosity.

"The devil of it!" burst out the Nazi at last. "These fellows say they want a reconciliation, but they back and fill and you can't get anything definite out of them. What do they really want? What are they up to?"

"They're playing a pretty dangerous game, Rudi. If Churchill finds out what they're doing he'll chop off their heads—I mean, their official heads, and he might even put them in quod."

"Well, how can they expect to get anywhere with us unless they take a risk?"

"It may be they are holding back to make you state your terms."

"But damn it all, we are the men who hold all the cards!"

"I know that, and they doubtless know it too; but they don't want to admit it."

"The only sensible thing for two people who have a dispute is to sit down and talk things over, man to man."

"Yes, indeed, and I wish to heaven I could bring about such an event—I would be a proud art expert."

"Lanny, I have to take you still further into my confidence. The Führer authorized me to say that he would agree to withdraw entirely from Western Europe. That means Norway, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, and France—exclusive of Alsace-Lorraine, of course."

"That is certainly a generous offer. I don't see how the British could expect more."

"That was supposed to come as the climax of negotiations, and to settle the matter."

"Then you don't want me to hint at that to the Beaver?"

"I'm not sure about it. What do you think?"

"God forbid that I should butt in on matters of state, Rudi. If I were to make a mistake the Führer would never forgive me, and neither would you. Decisions like that are for statesmen."

"All right then, tell him that's our offer. Damn his soul! I can't forget the things he said about us in his filthy papers."

"They don't take things like that too seriously in the plutocratic world, Rudi. The papers are printed for money and what goes into them is what they think the rabble wants."

X

This man who was not trying to make money, but to make the world over in the image of his Führer, wanted to hear about all the people whom Lanny had met in Madrid and what they had told him. Lanny reported what General Aguilar had said about the state of Spanish nutrition and transportation, and what the General's daughter had said about the state of the Spanish soul. Hess, it appeared, had had a highly secret meeting with Franco on the previous day, and Franco had said the same things, only more of them. "He insists that Spain could not possibly take Gibraltar by herself."

Lanny smiled. "But he is willing for you to come and do it, I can guess!"

"I wouldn't say that exactly; he knows that we have the power, and the moral right—considering what we did for him, and the debts he owes us."

"You wouldn't really have much trouble with the Rock, I should guess. Warfare has changed. They have almost no room for aviation and what they have you could knock out in one night. When you got it, the Mediterranean would be your sea—that is, unless you chose to share it with Il Duce."

The Deputy made a face. "Leave him out! The Italians are a liability, except for the munitions they produce. But we have to resist the temptation to scatter our forces in too many fields. Look at what the British did in Greece—the most frightful military blunder, for which they are paying now. To have sent two whole divisions in a perfectly futile effort to save that miserable little country! As a result, they have weakened their forces in Libya, and we are driving them in rout and probably will not stop until we have taken Suez. If we do that, the Mediterranean will be ours; for what use will it be to the British if they cannot get to India by it?"

All that was high strategy, and Lanny expressed his admiration for it, and his willingness to accept the Führer's judgment. He sang the praises of this man of miracles—the sure way to warm the heart of the man's Deputy, as well as of the man himself. Rudi said: "What a difference between a commander of great vision and one of small!" I argued with Franco for an hour: "You are thinking about the safety of Spain, and of yourself; but where will Spain be, and where will you be, if the British win this war?" Franco smiled slyly and replied: "But they're not going to win, Herr Hess; you cannot afford to let them." You see his idea: we are to fight his war for him, while he trades with both sides, and takes care of his food supply and transportation."

"He doesn't stop to think what your attitude will be toward him when the war is over."

"Oh, he's thinking about it now, you can bet!" exclaimed the Deputy. "I put it to him straight that we should have learned who were our friends, and who were the ingrates of Europe."

"And he took that?"

"Took it? What else could he do? I gave him the dressing down of his life, the miserable, cringing little renegade."

"Well, that is good to hear. But he isn't going to take Gibraltar?"

"Not until we can spare troops enough to do the work and let him take the glory, as he did last time."

XI

For two days more the Deputy stayed in the Madrid palace, waiting for his Beaver, who showed none of the eagerness attributed to that creature. Each day Rudi sent for his friend and adviser, Lanny Budd, and each day in his impatience he revealed a few more of his secrets. He had had the extraordinary idea to send an airmail letter to the Governor of Gibraltar; he had somehow got the idea that this Lord Gort was a member of The Link, and Rudi had offered to fly to Gibraltar for a meeting. He was startled by the reply he received—to the effect that he was free to fly to Gibraltar, but that if he landed there his lordship would have him shot!

So there was nothing for the chief of the National-Socialist German Working-men's Party to do but fly back to Berlin. He was in a fever of vexation about it; and after Lanny had said good-bye to him one evening he summoned him again in the morning, and poured out his soul anew. This was the greatest disappointment of his life, and he was not a man to accept failure; he was a man who drove through failure to success. In the evening he had begged Lanny to get to work in London and produce results. An American art expert was to end the war between Britain and Germany; where all the intrigues of half a dozen Nazi secret services had failed! But now in the morning Hess had another and even more bizarre idea—one which he said had been haunting his mind for a long while, and which he had been keeping the closest of secrets.

"Matters of high policy simply cannot be discussed at long range, Lanny; they call for personal contacts, and the give and take of discussion. But Churchill will not send anybody, nor permit anybody to come. So it is my idea to fly to England."

"You mean—Churchill will receive you?"

"I mean to go unannounced; just fly in an unarmed plane and land at some carefully chosen spot."

"But, good God, Rudi! You would be shot down on the way!"

"I would take my chances. I am a pretty good pilot, you know."

"But, can you find a landing place that is without ack-ack?"

"If it came to the worst, I can parachute."

"But, then, they would shoot you for a spy!"

"I would wear my uniform, so they couldn't do that."

"But, at best, you would be a prisoner of war."

"I doubt it. They would give me diplomatic status, once they realized what I had come for. Surely it is permissible for a man to ask for peace!"

Lanny hesitated for quite a time. He knew that this was one of the critical moments in his job. "What do you say?" asked the Number Three, and Lanny replied: "You are putting a frightful responsibility upon me, Rudi. If I should guess wrong, you would never forgive me as long as you lived, and neither would the Führer."

"I do not have to tell him that I have spoken to you about it. As a matter of fact, I may not tell him if I decide to do it. He has given me a free hand to do whatever I think will help get Britain out of the war; and he might prefer to be spared the responsibility of knowing."

"Well, you can't expect me to feel any differently from the Führer, Rudi. How in the world can I guess what the British would do? If you succeeded, of course, it would be one of the greatest coups in history."

"That is the way I see it. I have reasons for believing that the British people don't like this war any better than we. My action would tell them, in striking and dramatic fashion, that the Germans want peace, and who is blocking it."

"That is undoubtedly true. But, my God, I can't tell you to go!"

"I don't ask for that. All I want is your frank opinion. What would Wickthorpe do if I landed at the Castle?"

"I can't imagine. He would be stunned, and probably wouldn't know what to do."

"Wouldn't he get his friends to meet me and talk things over?"

"He might want to try. But in the first place, Rudi, there is no airport there; and it's so close to London, a settled district—there are few big fields as you have in Germany, and if there are any, they have perhaps been cut with ditches to keep planes from landing."

"I might decide upon some remote place. Hamilton has an estate in Scotland. I could just as well fly there, coming in over Norway."

"Ceddy has a shooting box in Scotland; but nobody shoots in springtime."

"The Scottish highlands must be worth a visit at this season."

Couldn't Ceddy and his wife take a trip just for pleasure? Couldn't you think up some excuse to get them there—say for the pleasure of your little daughter?"

"I don't know; they are both very busy in their own way, trying to end the war. I could suggest it, of course."

"If you could arrange it, I could find the shooting box. You wouldn't have to bother with the details—my agents would attend to it, and I'd have a good map—that part would be no trouble at all. I could be hidden at some remote place like that, and a few trusted people could come to see me, one or two at a time so as not to attract attention."

"You'd be taking a tremendous risk, Rudi."

"*Herrgott*, what does that matter? I am a soldier, trying to serve my cause. If I die, there are trained men who could take my place as head of the Party. The Führer would miss me, but he would know that I had done my best."

This proved to be a long visit. The Deputy was in deadly earnest, and he raked his friend's mind, asking a string of questions. He named persons, some of whom Lanny knew, and others whom he guessed must be members of that mysterious organization, The Link. Evidently the collaborationist movement was far stronger than he had guessed. Appeasement was still alive, and its spirit was even livelier!

The P.A.'s last words were: "This would be a colossal sensation, Rudi; it would shake the world. I'll do what I can to help, but don't for one moment forget: I haven't advised it, and I don't take any responsibility."

"On that basis *auf Wiedersehen!*" said Rudolf Hess, and added, turning the verses around:

"Oh, ye'll tak' the low road
And I'll tak' the high road,
And I'll be in Scotland afore ye!"

15

Oh, to Be in England!

I

THERE were many persons waiting in Madrid for aeroplane accommodations to Lisbon; but Lanny Budd did not have to wait, he merely had to mention the matter to Hess, who mentioned it to one of his agents. Arriving in the Portuguese capital, Lanny cabled to his father's London solicitors, and then identified himself at the Bank of the Holy Ghost and took steps to draw on his London bankers. Tourists were sometimes surprised to learn that the Holy Ghost had gone into the banking business in Lisbon; also, when they went for a stroll in the city's most showy boulevard, they wondered why it was called Avenida da Liberdade—in a city and country ruled by an iron-handed dictator.

The soil of Portugal was at the mercy of the Nazi armies, and its harbours at the mercy of the British Fleet. Therefore the government was carefully and systematically neutral, and this attitude was tolerated because both warring powers found it convenient. Passenger and cargo planes flew in from all points of the compass, and military aviators from Britain and Germany drank at the same bars, eyeing one another but not speaking. Spies of every sort swarmed in the city; and the air or ether or whatever it is that carries radio messages in secret codes got no rest day or night. In the poverty-stricken countryside labourers toiled for fifty cents per day, but in Lisbon cafés and brothels and gambling casinos money flowed like water in the river Tejo, which the English call Tagus.

Fleuve du Tage was the name of an opera melody which Lanny at the age of five or six had had as a finger exercise on the piano. In the mountains of the interior he had once helped Alf Pomeroy-Nielson to get across that river, escaping from Spain. There it had been clean, but it had become lazy and muddied in this busy estuary where ships gathered from all over the world. Now and then you would hear firing at sea, which meant that some ship was in trouble; but nobody bothered about it in Lisbon. So far as a tourist could see, nobody in Lisbon bothered about anything, and neither did anybody

If men had the price, they sipped oversweet coffee; if not, they stared at the foreign women—mostly at the legs, which were novelties in a Catholic capital where the women wore skirts down to their ankle-bones. This Portuguese habit of staring had been utilized by the Nazis for their propaganda. The newspapers were rigidly controlled and their falsehoods divided equally, so the Germans hired store windows and set up exhibits of the wonders of their New Order. They had speedily made the discovery that the Lisbonites had no interest in statistics as to the increase in German coal production, but would stand for hours gazing at photographs of sturdy blonde Aryan *Mädchen* in abbreviated or non-existent swim-suits. *Heil Hitler!*

It was the pleasantest time of the year, and Lanny, waiting for his plane ticket, found it enjoyable to ride out to Estoril, the swanky bathing beach and gambling resort, much like those on the Côte d'Azur. He knew so many people in Europe that he met one or more on every esplanade. The only trouble was that so many of these were refugees, frantic to escape from this slim edge of a Nazi continent. Many were out of funds, and he might have been glad to help one or two of them—if it could have been done secretly. As it was, he hardly dared be seen speaking to them.

Instead, he amused himself by permitting a Japanese spy to strike up an acquaintance with him. These small gentry swarmed all over the place, correctly dressed in outing flannels or white evening clothes or whatever the occasion called for; they bowed low and showed rows of yellowish teeth, and the polite art expert accepted an invitation to make a foursome at golf; when he found that he was beating them he played badly, having heard that they were not good losers. He gave them information, but it was mostly about modern painting, and what he gave about his own affairs was not correct. When this palled, he lay on the sand and watched Portuguese fishing craft with upswept prows inherited from the Egyptians and Phoenicians; or he read New York and London newspapers, which came by air and could be bought at a high price. When his hour of departure arrived and a British flying boat lifted him into the air, he decided that the white stone and stucco capital looked much more attractive from that point of view.

II

In London a P.A.'s first duty was to lock himself in his hotel room and type out what he had learned in Madrid and Lisbon. The promises of secrecy to Rudolf Hess had been made with his fingers crossed; Lanny told F.D. all about The Link and the Englishmen who reportedly belonged to it; also about the Deputy's mad scheme to fly

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to England—but predicting that when the Deputy got back to Berlin he would find more useful ways to serve his Führer. The really important matters were that the coming invasion of the Soviet Union was positively confirmed, and that Franco had definitely made up his mind to wait and allow Hitler to take Gibraltar for him. Spain's pitiful condition was doubtless already known to the President; but he would be interested to know how large a percentage of the imports then permitted to enter the country were being passed straight on to Germany.

Having seen this letter safely delivered to the American Embassy, Lanny was free. As usual the first thing he did was to get The Reaches on the telephone. "Hello, this is Bienvenu. Can you come to town?" It took Rick only two or three hours to get there, and then what a time they had! Lanny kept nothing from this lifelong friend, save only the name of his Chief in America. In the obscure hotel which they had chosen for their rendezvous there was no chance of dictaphones or spies, and Lanny unbosomed himself of the whole Hitler-Hess picture. "You understand," he said, "this project of flying here is absolutely top secret, and you mustn't even hint at it."

"Righto!" was Rick's reply. "If the man isn't mad, then I am."

"If he comes unarmed he can't hurt anybody, so we don't have to worry. He seems to have a lot of backing here, and that is what is serious. The business of The Link looks pretty black to me."

"I find it hard to believe, Lanny. The Pater knows one—a career diplomatist—and if he's turned traitor I'll surely be surprised. As for the Beaver, his papers are shouting for more and harder war, and that hardly seems to fit in with secret trips to negotiate a surrender."

"Not exactly a surrender, Rick; but of course it would amount to that in the long run. Could it possibly be that a great newspaper proprietor has changed his mind but hasn't got around to telling his staff?"

"The devil only can guess what is going on in the mind of a press lord. But this occurs to me—that somebody on our side may be playing with Hess, somebody besides you. Have you thought of that?"

"I began thinking of it from the first moment I heard about this Link. Somebody may have made it up, and be sending Hess a lot of letters in the names of various Englishmen."

"It would be pretty tough on the Englishmen; but I suppose anything would be fair in a war against such rotters."

"Who would be doing it, do you suppose?"

"Probably B4. That's our last word in secrecy; we aren't supposed ever to breathe the syllables. They'd be trying to lure some top Nazi agent over here and then trail him and see whom he visits. Or maybe they just want revenge for the Venloo incident—you remember, at the

outset of the war, the Nazis raided across the Dutch border and kidnapped two of our important agents."

"This is getting to be pretty hot stuff, Rick—spies and traitors, and plots inside plots."

"Be careful somebody doesn't kidnap *you*," remarked the baronet's son, and that seemed an invitation for Lanny to tell the story of his odd experience in the back country of Toulon. "My God!" exclaimed Rick. "What a life you do live! And how you do get about!"

Lanny asked: "How is Alf?" and the reply was: "He had a crash, but got off lightly. He's in hospital with a couple of ribs and a shoulder cracked. What he's afraid of is that they'll ground him and put him to teaching."

"He has done his share," was Lanny's comment. "Give him my love. You know, of course, I can't go to see him."

"Surely not," said the father. "He wouldn't expect it."

III

Lanny went off and thought matters over. An idea occurred to him, and next morning he called the modern structure known as the "Black-glass House," the office of the *Daily Express* and the *Evening Standard*. He asked for the secretary of Lord Beaverbrook, and to this functionary he said: "This is the American art expert, Lanny Budd. Lord Beaverbrook will remember having met me at Wickthorpe Castle, also at Maxine Elliott's home in Cannes, along with Mr. Churchill. I have just returned from a visit to Berlin, and thought that he might be interested to have a report on what I found there. Explain that this is strictly personal and private, nothing to be published."

The secretary said: "One moment, please," and then reported: "His lordship wishes to know if you will lunch with him at the Carlton Club at one o'clock."

Lanny figured that it couldn't do him any harm to be seen with this noble gentleman, because Hitler and Hess believed him to be on their side, and Hess had asked for a report on him. "The Beaver," as he was called by the British masses was Max Aitken, and he had been a company promoter in Canada; he had come to London with a million pounds and devoted himself with infinite ardour to English journalism. He was one of America's contributions of "ginger" to the motherland; Winston Churchill being another, or, to be exact, one-half of another. The Beaver had filled his papers with gossip, "spice," and political opinion.

An aggressive ego, he ordinarily made it difficult to get a word in edgeways. But he really wanted to know how matters stood in Hitlerland, and also in the Franco jail, so he plied his guest with questions. He found it hard to believe that a man could be carrying on the business of purchasing old masters in the midst of a continental war. Lanny said, with a grin: "If you'll come to my room at the Marchester I'll show you a couple of them." The American didn't say anything about Rudolf Hess's project of flying to Scotland, but he said in general terms that both Hitler and his Deputy were most anxious for an understanding with Britain, as a preliminary to their invasion of Russia.

"They've got to invade anyhow, haven't they?" asked the newspaper proprietor, his shrewd little eyes twinkling.

"Of course, but if they have to fight Britain at the same time, they may not win. They figure you wouldn't like to have the Reds come out on top." This was a problem that worried all members of ruling classes, all privileged persons in the world. The proprietor of the *Standard* and the *Express* sat with knitted brows.

"Tell me," said the P.A. "Have you ever taken any interest in The Link?"

"The Link?" repeated the other. "What is that?" His tone appeared genuine.

"I don't know much about it, but was told it's a group of people trying to face up to this problem and to work out some basis for an understanding between the two countries."

"I did my share of trying," declared his lordship. "But those Nazis are bastards that nobody can trust. The feeling of our people is that they have to be put out of business. Nobody is ever again going to be left in a position to bomb these islands."

So that was that; and Lanny talked for a while about the state of German finances and food supply. He discussed Paris under the occupation, and what Schneider's friends had said. And then to Spain: he mentioned that Franco was standing out against the Nazi demand as to Gibraltar, and this the Beaver heard with satisfaction. In the course of the talk Lanny remarked, casually: "I was rather expecting to meet you while I was in Madrid."

"Why should you have expected that?" inquired the other.

"There was a report that you were coming. Somebody told me it was in the papers."

"Many silly rumours get started in wartime. I haven't any reason for going to Spain."

"Perhaps," remarked the P.A. with a smile, "the Nazis were trying to get hold of you, to talk peace."

"Never again!" said his lordship, and used language that would have ruined his papers.

When they parted, Lanny said : " All this is strictly off the record. You can use the facts as background, but I don't want to be interviewed or even mentioned."

" Certainly, certainly," said the Beaver somewhat testily, for a newspaperman does not like to have his valuable services spurned. " What you have told me is illuminating, Mr. Budd. I will esteem it a favour if you will call me up whenever you come to town."

Lanny went out and telephoned Rick. " You remember the man who was supposed to be going to Madrid ? I just talked with him and he says it's not so. Evidently that matter isn't what it is supposed to be, but something else again."

" I get you," said Rick. Like many other Englishmen, his language had been corrupted by contact with Americans.

IV

Lanny strolled about London. The springtime air was balmy, and overhead the barrage balloons waved slowly in the breeze, looking like huge fat silver sausages. In all the parks were anti-aircraft guns. Lanny was curious to see what landmarks of the old City were gone. The shaky walls had been torn down and the rubble cleared away, and there were acres of empty space around St. Paul's. He wondered what they would put there when the war was over, if it ever was. Would they behave like the ants and the bees, and restore everything exactly as it had always been ? He wondered how it was possible for the financial world to carry on its infinitely complex affairs in spite of such destruction. Rick had said they were doing it, a little here and a little there ; some underground, some in the suburbs. There would always be an England !

According to his custom he telephoned to Wickthorpe. Would it be agreeable for him to pay a visit ? Irma said : " Frances asks for you every day." Lanny specified the train he would take ; a car would meet him at the station.

It was the end of April, the loveliest time of the year. Not many bombs had been wasted on this countryside, and fears were ended. When you came to the Castle, you discovered that the lovely green lawns which had been nibbled by so many generations of sheep had been ploughed up and planted to cabbages. All save one little corner, where Caddy played at bowls with the curate and other friends !

Lanny's little daughter came in the car to meet him, and she never let go of his hand. Somehow she had decided that he was a very wonderful father ; his absence made her heart grow fonder, and now

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" I get you," said Rick. Like many other Englishmen, his language had been corrupted by contact with Americans.

IV

Lanny strolled about London. The springtime air was balmy, and overhead the barrage balloons waved slowly in the breeze, looking like huge fat silver sausages. In all the parks were anti-aircraft guns. Lanny was curious to see what landmarks of the old City were gone. The shaky walls had been torn down and the rubble cleared away, and there were acres of empty space around St. Paul's. He wondered what they would put there when the war was over, if it ever was. Would they behave like the ants and the bees, and restore everything exactly as it had always been ? He wondered how it was possible for the financial world to carry on its infinitely complex affairs in spite of such destruction. Rick had said they were doing it, a little here and a little there ; some underground, some in the suburbs. There would always be an England !

According to his custom he telephoned to Wickthorpe. Would it be agreeable for him to pay a visit ? Irma said : " Frances asks for you every day." Lanny specified the train he would take ; a car would meet him at the station.

It was the end of April, the loveliest time of the year. Not many bombs had been wasted on this countryside, and fears were ended. When you came to the Castle, you discovered that the lovely green lawns which had been nibbled by so many generations of sheep had been ploughed up and planted to cabbages. All save one little corner, where Caddy played at bowls with the curate and other friends !

Lanny's little daughter came in the car to meet him, and she never let go of his hand. Somehow she had decided that he was a very wonderful father ; his absence made her heart grow fonder, and now

she dragged him all over the place, to show him new crops that had been planted and new creatures that had been born. The refugee children from London were at school; all scrubbed, fed on vitamins, and taught proper manners. Ceaseless pressure from both sides had broken down barriers, and Frances was allowed to take part in their games now and then, and even to let some of them ride on her pony. She had just celebrated her eleventh birthday with a big party, and they as well as the village children had all been invited; everybody had been nice to her and it was "scrumptious." Lanny was not allowed to teach her democracy, but if the war did it, he could approve.

Eight months had passed since he had seen her. He had had little notes from her in America, carefully written—he suspected they had been revised and recopied. Also drawings, and little paintings in water-colour, submitted to him as an expert. Now there were more of these, and he gave her advice; he watched her mind and the questions she asked. She was becoming aware of the great world; the war was forcing geography and history upon the attention of everyone. To Frances it was thrilling and delightful—no sense of the pain, or of fear. He marvelled at life renewing itself; at eagerness, curiosity, trust in nature, which was cruel as often as it was kind.

Frances Barnes Budd was going to be a little English girl; nothing else was possible. She had the accent and the key phrases of the ruling class. Also she would have the manners; she would learn to repress her enthusiasms, to wear a mask before the world. Irma, sedate and placid, would make her over in the mother image; it was a mother's privilege. She would say: "Hush, dear! Not so loud." English children were becoming more free and easy in their manners, but Irma did not approve, and Lanny said nothing. Only when they were alone he let the little one enjoy herself; he told her about Isadora Duncan's dancing, gave her an idea of it, then played the piano and let her try.

Lanny did not fail to pay his respects to the Honourable James Ponsonby Cavendish Cedric Barnes, Viscount Masterson, who was destined to become the fifteenth Earl of Wickthorpe. He was two years of age, toddling away whenever he was let loose, and staring at strangers out of big blue eyes. Also, to make assurance doubly sure, there was his younger brother, the Honourable Gerald Cedric Barnes Masterson, born on the day that Paris fell. He was just trying to get up on his feet, and whatever he could find on the floor he tried surreptitiously to get into his mouth. Irma's duty to the British Empire had been done, and she was concerned that it should not have been done in vain—in other words, that the Reds shouldn't get it!

In the evening, Lanny sat with his former wife and her present husband. "Good breeding" made this possible; the most important thing in their world. They talked freely about other personalities, but never about themselves or their own troubles. When Irma had quarrelled with Lanny and left him, she had talked it over with her mother and made up her mind: there must be no scandal, no re-criminations. They were different people and could not live together, but they were decent people and could respect each other's rights.

Later, when the Earl of Wickthorpe had come wooing, the practical-minded Irma had had an understanding with him on the difficult role of stepfather. Little Frances would be a permanent fact in their lives. Having been celebrated in the newspapers as the twenty-three-million-dollar baby, she could not be treated as an ordinary human mite; Lanny couldn't just come and carry her off to a hotel, or to *Bienvenu* or Newcastle; her mother would never have a moment's rest for fear of kidnappers. No, he would have to come to the Castle to see the child. Ceddy said: "Why not?" and Irma remarked: "The village will call it a scandal." He replied: "The village belongs to me, not I to the village." It was the voice of his ancestors whose portraits hung in a long gallery, most of them with swords and several clad in mail.

The matter was made easier by the fact that Lanny and Ceddy had known each other since boyhood. They had never been intimates, but had been on coaching parties to the races, and later on to international conferences where they had drunk cocktails and discussed the strange manners and morals of continental diplomatists. They knew what to expect of each other; what was done and what wasn't. Irma's new marriage was what she wanted, and wiped the memories of old intimacies out of her mind. Neither she nor Ceddy knew that Lanny had been married again, but Lanny knew it, and that helped him. When he thought about love, it was heroism and martyrdom. The Trudi-ghost still walked with him, and supervised not merely his actions but his imaginings.

VI

They sat in the library with the doors closed, and talked about what to them were the most important subjects in the world. In eight months they had exchanged no letters, because what they wanted to say could not be trusted to the eyes of censors. So there was much to tell: Lanny's adventures in New York, Hollywood, Vichy, Berlin,

Paris, Madrid, Lisbon. He appeared to be talking freely, but in reality he was holding back a lot. Nothing about the plot against Roosevelt, for that did not concern this couple; they might wonder how he had come to know so much, and might suspect that he was romancing. The same went for the misadventure in Toulon; let sleeping dogs lie. What concerned this pair was the personalities of the Vichy leaders, and the prospects regarding the French Fleet, North Africa, Syria. And then Franco and Gibraltar. Lanny told what Hitler had said on the all-important problem of an understanding with Britain; what Hess and Göring had said, and the activities of Hess in Madrid. There he stopped, and waited for his friends to comment. He said nothing about Hess's project of coming to England.

"The situation here is extremely depressing," declared the Earl of Wickthorpe. "Did you see anything about my speech before the Lords last month?"

"I saw it mentioned in one of the papers, but very briefly."

"I will give you the text to read. I went as far as I dared, but I am afraid you won't think it was far enough. Sentiment in England has been steadily hardening, on account of the bombing of districts where there are no military objectives and where the purpose can only be that of terrorizing. Also, the torpedoings have been so merciless, and so cruel, especially in winter. I am afraid we have to concede that Churchill has the country in his hands."

"That is not quite the same as winning the war," ventured Lanny.

"No, indeed, and that is the tragedy of it. The ruinous struggle goes on, and we have to watch it helplessly."

"Tell me," put in Irma, "do you still feel that the Führer can be trusted?"

"I don't think I have ever said quite that, Irma. I think he can be trusted so far as his immediate objectives are concerned. He wants peace very much, because it is obviously to his interest. What his attitude will be later depends upon the arrangements you make with him and how matters work out."

"That uncertainty is precisely what makes our position intolerable," resumed Caddy. "I find that our friends and sympathizers are conceding one point after another to the government. Most significant of all, they lose interest in the cause of peace; they just retire, and occupy themselves with their personal affairs."

"Like yourself," Lanny thought, but didn't say it.

"What has made it so impossible for us," declared Irma, "is this lease-lend business that Roosevelt has started. Does Robbie think that is going to continue?"

"I haven't heard from Robbie since it started. I cabled him from Lisbon and no doubt he'll write me here, but you know how the

censorship delays mail for weeks; Robbie knows it, too, and never discusses public affairs. Just 'all well and busy,' or perhaps that one of the grandchildren has the mumps."

There it was, all very depressing, as Ceddy had declared. Really, only one gleam of light in the sky, for a member of the old nobility. (Ceddy didn't count the press lords and the beer barons, and found it hard to be polite to the labour peers of the Ramsay MacDonald era.) "Tell me," he said, "is Hitler really going after Russia?"

"He practically admitted it to me, and so did Hess. It seems to be generally accepted in Paris and Madrid."

"Yes, but should we accept it? It seems to me that if he really meant to do it, he'd be admitting something else."

"So far he hasn't worked that way. He makes a joke of it, saying that he always tells exactly what he is going to do, because then his enemies will be sure it can't be true."

"I know; but in this supremely important matter he might decide to vary his technique."

"It might be. We'll soon know, for he has finished in Greece and must show his hand."

"All our reports indicate that he is going into Crete."

"Yes, but that's a job for paratroopers, not for a large army. He's bound to be moving his Balkan troops to the eastward, and surely your Intelligence will report that to you before long."

"It seems almost too good to happen," was the wife's comment; and the pessimistic husband admitted: "I suppose that is the solution we have to accept. Let those two dictators chew each other up, and give us a chance to get some goods from America!"

VIII

Lanny stayed a week-end at the Castle and met the usual distinguished company. He gave them picturesque and entertaining details concerning life among their enemies. Americans were still in that fortunate position, they could go anywhere in the world if they had the proper credentials—and nobody found it strange that the son of Budd-Erling should have obtained them. He didn't tell any crucial facts, and, above all, no hint that Rudolf Hess was contemplating a visit. In the first place, Lanny didn't think he was coming, and, in any case, the statement would have made a sensation, and would almost certainly have got into the newspapers, and brought Lanny in with it.

Enough to say that the Führer desperately wanted reconciliation with England, and that all three of the top men had begged the

American to say this on every possible occasion. The company raised the same question as Ceddy: Could anybody trust him? Lanny evaded, saying that it was a question for psychologists and statesmen, not for an art expert. He would listen attentively and make note of facts that came out during the talk. Thus, from Gerald Albany of the Foreign Office he learned that the Russians were making overtures for new trade agreements with Britain; they had become much "softer" in their attitude, which meant, said the clergyman's son, that they had discovered which way the wind was blowing. They were trying to buy arms in America, and Washington was being extremely non-committal.

Lanny went back to town, under the bombs, and wrote out a report on what he had learned. It was considered good form to ignore danger, so he attended a symphony concert, and some of the music was German. He came back to his hotel and was reading an evening paper in his room when the phone rang. "A gentleman to see you, sir; the name, Mr. Branscome." Lanny didn't know any such gentleman, but it was the business of an art expert, and also of a secret agent, to see anybody. He went downstairs—it being easier to get rid of a bore that way.

There was a man in the lobby, middle-aged, well dressed, and speaking properly; but he had a dissipated look, or something off colour—Lanny decided at a glance that it wasn't anybody he cared to cultivate. Then he got a start. The stranger said: "Mr. Budd, are you acquainted with a person named Kurvenal?"

Caution was instinctive in this matter. Lanny said: "I have heard the name."

"Would it be a woman, by chance?"

Smiling his most amiable smile, Lanny replied. "Why would you want to know?"

"I was asked to find out if you had a message for her."

"I see. And are you in a position to convey a message to her?"

"I am."

The P.A. didn't have to take time for thought, having anticipated this possibility and decided upon a reply. "Tell her I have been working busily and that the situation is favourable."

"Is that all, Mr. Budd?"

"She will understand that, and it will be all right."

"Thank you, sir, and good evening." The man turned and left the lobby quickly. Lanny went back to his room, wondering what kind of Englishman was doing dirty work like that. It was easy to understand why he had not stayed to get acquainted, for if he had been caught he would surely have been shot. "Branscome" was doubtless a name he had made up, and he would be careful to keep

himself where the son of Budd-Erling would not lay eyes on him again. Talk about "a woman" was no doubt meant to prepare himself an alibi; he could say that he hadn't known what the message was about, he had been tricked into doing the errand for another man.

VIII

Lanny gave a lot of thought to that incident. He knew that he was playing a complicated and dangerous game, and he didn't want to make any slip. He reminded himself that he was not working for Rudi Hess, and owed him neither help nor truth. To the Wickthorpes he owed something, but nothing compared to what he owed to the cause of human freedom. The noble pair were beginning to hedge, but they hadn't been hedging eight months ago, when they had given Lanny every encouragement to go and see Hess and to speak for them. If now they had changed, Lanny had no way to let Hess know it. He certainly wasn't going to name any names or give any personal messages to a strange Mr. Branscome who looked like what was called a "ticket-of-leave" man.

The more Lanny thought about this episode, the more firmly he decided that "Kurvenal" should remain a woman from this time on. If B4 was setting a trap for Nazi Three, what was more likely than that they had been watching him in Madrid, and even in Berlin? If so, they knew that the son of Budd-Erling had visited Hess's home, and had been closeted with him in the Madrid palace. They might somehow have learned that the two had exchanged passwords, and in that case they would surely have made use of the words to find out what the much-travelled American was up to.

Lanny had been caught in one trap, and was firmly resolved not to let it happen again. The more he thought about the Toulon episode, the more clear it became to him that the French underground must have had a spy in Admiral Darlan's office, and received a report to the effect that the Admiral had been drinking brandy with an American pro-Nazi posing as an art expert, and had given that dangerous person a letter of introduction to the commandant of the port of Toulon. What sort of hornets' nest Lanny had there blundered into he could only guess. The partisans, hiding out in the hills and getting arms and ammunition by raiding government *camions*, would be hunted incessantly by government police and troops, spies and informers would be swarming, and doubtless there had been executions in the courtyard of the naval prison, and assassinations in reprisal. It was a civil war, everywhere the most cruel.

Whatever it was, Lanny had walked blandly into it, and he surely

didn't want to repeat the error. Let B4 and *Nummer Drei* fight their secret war and leave a P.A. out of it! He would go back to Wickthorpe and play the piano for Frances and teach her to dance; he would help make up a four for contract bridge with Fanny Barnes, Irma's large worldly mother, and Fanny's poor crippled old derelict stock-gambler brother whom Lanny had been taught to call "Uncle Horace." Now and then, when he was tempted to worry, he told himself that it was all nonsense anyhow—Rudi Hess, while he was a fanatic, had some common sense, and would realize that the scheme was crazy. Or he would tell his Führer about it—and the Führer would send him to organize the National-Socialist Party of Yugoslavia or of Greece.

IX

Lanny returned to the Castle. On account of war crowding, he had to stay in the spare bedroom of the two-hundred-year-old cottage occupied by Fanny and her brother. It had been "modernized" by Irma, along with everything else on the estate, and had two tiled bathrooms, a telephone, and the proper kitchen gadgets. Lanny could shut himself up in his room and read, or come out and turn on the radio and listen to the tragic news from south-eastern Europe. When Frances was through with her daily studies he would play croquet with her, or teach her tennis strokes. He could get more time with her by agreeing to speak French, for then it would be a lesson. His pleasure in her society he explained by saying that she was the only female creature he knew who did not wish either to marry him or to get him married. Even Irma had made a couple of passes at finding him the right sort of wife!

When his conscience troubled him in the midst of war he told himself that he had reported to F.D.R. everything he knew; he had got far ahead of the game, and now must wait until Hitler made another move. As for the cabal against Roosevelt, the Chief had as much as told him there was no need to bother with it; Europe was Lanny's field. And besides, you never knew who was going to turn up at Wickthorpe, a week-end here was better than sitting in at a meeting of the British Cabinet. All sorts of people came and brought all sorts of news, and a secret agent of any government in the world would have paid a high price for the privilege of being present.

So matters went, until Friday, the 9th day of May 1941: a day when the newspapers were full of debates in the House, where "Winnie" had got a vote of confidence of 447 to 3—which seemed like a slap in the face to Wickthorpe Castle. Lanny read the news from New York and Washington, rather skimpy as a rule, the papers

quoted the Secretary of War, who promised generous aid to Britain; also President Roosevelt had asked Congress for funds to build five hundred bombers. That would take two years and cost a billion dollars, the opposition objected; they called it "perfectly wicked."

Lanny's reading was interrupted by a maid-servant bringing the morning mail to the cottage. There was only one letter for him, an inconspicuous envelope, addressed by an unfamiliar hand. Opening it he found a plain sheet of paper with four handwritten words which caused his heart to give a violent thump. "I am coming. Kurvenal."

The words were English, and the script also. It was not a note that Hess himself had written, but one that he had had written by one of his agents in England, perhaps "Branscome." The Deputy Führer might have ordered it by radio, or by one of those devices the Nazis were using, such as advertisements in the newspapers of Sweden, Spain, or Portugal, which came into Britain regularly; the advertisements looked innocent, but they were code. The letter had been mailed in London the previous day, but it bore no date and no one could guess how long the message had taken to reach London. For all that Lanny could tell, Hess might be flying to-night !

He took a walk, to think the matter over; then he went to the Castle, where he found the Earl of Wickthorpe in his study, busy with his secretary. Lanny said: "There is something urgent that I must talk to you and Irma about." Ceddy told the secretary to go and ask his wife to come down, and presently the three of them were shut up in the study: Ceddy in plus-fours and a polo shirt, Irma in a brocaded Japanese kimono, her hair in two long dark braids. She wouldn't have come that way, only her husband had commanded "at once."

Lanny wasted no words on preliminaries. "I have just received a note telling me that Rudolf Hess is coming to England."

"To England !" echoed Ceddy, dumbfounded. "What for ?"

"Mainly, in the hope of seeing you. He is going to fly in an unarmed plane, and land somewhere on your shooting-grounds in Scotland. He wants you to be there and meet him."

"Good God !" exclaimed the noble earl.

"For the sake of peace on earth and goodwill toward men," countered the other. "He expects to enlist your aid in that cause."

"Is the man mad, Lanny ? Or are you ?"

"He may be a bit mad, as most men are who want to change the world. But he's not too mad to fly a plane, and to come down by parachute if necessary."

"Did he tell you about this in advance?"

"He broached it to me in Madrid. I did what I could to discourage him. I told him he would be a prisoner of war."

"He will be shot!"

"No, he will wear a uniform, and his plane will be unarmed."

"Why didn't you tell us about this sooner, Lanny?"

"I didn't take it seriously. I thought I had managed to dissuade him, and I was quite sure the Führer wouldn't permit it."

"Oh! The Führer knows of it, then?"

"How that stands I can't be sure. This is all I have." Lanny passed the letter to his friend and both he and Irma studied it. "Kurvenal is the code name that Rudi took, so that if he sent any message I would know it was genuine. He said he had agents in England." Lanny had decided that there was no use mentioning "Branscome."

"What precisely does the man expect me to do?" demanded Caddy.

"He wants you and Irma to take me and Frances on a pleasure trip, and be at the shooting-box to meet him when he arrives."

"And for what purpose?"

"To consult with him as to how to bring peace between his country and yours."

"He thinks I have such power?"

"He thinks you are the centre of a group of men who have great influence. You understand, Caddy, I have been feeding him this idea for several years, in order to get him to talk. I did that with your knowledge, and brought you the results and you accepted them. Of course I never foresaw the possibility of such a development as this. I couldn't believe it then and I can hardly believe it now."

"It's going to raise the very devil if it happens, Lanny. It can't possibly be kept secret and it will blacken us for life."

"I don't see why you should expect such results. You have never met Hess anywhere, have you?"

"Never in my life."

"And you don't want to go to Scotland, I take it?"

"I do not!"

"All right, then. Sit tight, and let the government deal with Rudi. Maybe he won't mention you. If he does, just say you know nothing about it. You have had no communication from him and no sympathy with his ideas. That lets me out as well as you."

"Suppose he mentions *you*?"

"I doubt if he will, for I'm an American, and no excuse for his coming to England. If he does, I have my story: I'm an art expert

and I went to Germany on business; I have two paintings in the Marchester vault to prove it."

"Unfortunately, Irma has met Hess, and that will look bad. Shall you deny that you met him, Irma?"

"I suppose I shall have to," said the wife. It was the first time she had opened her mouth. "It'll be difficult, for I've told so many friends about having visited Berchtesgaden and met the Führer. I probably mentioned that Hess was in the room."

"I don't see why you should bother to deny anything," ventured Lanny. "It was long ago, before the war. You were my wife, and I went there on business. I was trying to sell the Führer some Detaze paintings, and shortly afterwards I did so; also I purchased a couple of Defreggers for him in Vienna."

"I suppose we can get away with that," said the worried husband. "I hate like all damnation to have that old stuff raked up."

"I don't see why it should be. Just lie low and refuse to say a word to the press. See some of your friends in the government and let them present the story officially, in such a way as to protect you. They ought to be glad to do it, for the last thing in the world they want is to give the impression that there is a strong peace movement or appeasement sentiment in this country."

"I suppose that is so," assented his lordship, but without any great conviction.

"You're in position to try a little polite blackmail on them. Make them see that they're all in the same boat with you and Irma."

Said Irma: "What I hope is that Hess will fall into the Channel!"

XI

There followed for the three persons a period of suspended animation. Lanny tried hard to interest himself in a best-selling novel, but without success. His lordship would go out to inspect his plantation—the estate had become that—and after half an hour he would come back and find his wife at the radio. "No news yet," she would say. They would wait five or ten minutes, and then Caddy would try again. It was like waiting for a thunderbolt to fall.

Their imaginations were occupied with all the possible things that might be happening to Walter Richard Rudolf Hess, on land and in the air and in the sea. These were unlimited in number. At this moment he might be leaving Germany, or trying to and failing; he might be in the act of being shot down, or floating in the sea, or parachuting to the land; he might be ordered away to Yugoslavia or Greece; he might be dead, or quietly eating breakfast, lunch, or

dinner at home; he might be the centre of the world's greatest sensation one minute from now, or he might never be heard of again. In short, there was nothing to do but wait until the thunderbolt had fallen, and then you would know where it had hit—unless it happened to hit you !

It would be years before the man in the street knew the whole story, but the Wickthorpes, being insiders, got it more quickly: a few shreds here and a few patches there, over a period of a week or two. When they had fitted them all together, this is what they had:

On May 9, the day Lanny received the four-word note, the Number Three Nazi had gone to Augsburg in Southern Bavaria, to deliver an address to the workers in the great Messerschmitt plane factory there. He took the occasion to inspect some improvements in the Me-110; he had taken a solo flight in this new fighter, designated " F," and was so pleased that he had decided to enjoy another flight on the next day. He spent the night with his friend Willi Messerschmitt, and on the following afternoon he appeared wearing the uniform of a captain of the Luftwaffe. He made sure that there was a tankful of gas, and that the guns of the plane were unloaded. Then he took off—and the worried Willi never saw either him or the plane again.

The adventurer must have flown northward, avoiding the Channel, which the German flyers called *Niemandswasser*—No Man's Water. He crossed the North Sea and approached Scotland from the east. Was it by accident or design that this same hour was chosen for one of the fiercest bombing attacks upon London? Some five hundred tons were unloaded, and as a result the most intense activity existed in the underground plotting room of the R.A.F. Fighter Command. New waves of bombers were being reported every few minutes, and when an isolated station on the eastern coast of Scotland announced an unidentified plane it was naturally guessed that it must be British. A few minutes later came a second report: the solitary plane had failed to identify itself, and its speed proved it to be a fighter.

That Scottish coast was a long way off, and fighter planes didn't get there—not if they were expecting to get back. In the plotting room of the Fighter Command was a large table that was a map, and when a hostile plane was detected a red pin was stuck in, with a tiny red arrow indicating the direction of the plane. For British fighters to take off in pursuit of such a plane was a matter of seconds, but in this case the defenders received an order never before and perhaps never since given in this war: " Force him down, but under no circumstances shoot at him ! " Two Hurricanes were soon on the trail of the plane, and the air was full of radio: " Don't shoot him down ! Don't fire a shot ! " The pursuing pilots could hardly believe their ears.

The stranger got almost all the way across Scotland, to the west

coast. The petrol supply gave out before it quite reached its goal, and the flyer took to his parachute. Striking the ground, he wrenched one ankle, and by the time he had managed to extricate himself from the parachute cords, there was a farmer standing over him with a pitchfork, demanding to know whether he was British or enemy. His reply was that he was a "friendly German," and unarmed, so the farmer helped him to the house. He gave the name of Alfred Horn, and said that he wanted to see the Duke of Hamilton, whose great estate was near by; or if the Duke was not at the estate, he wanted to see the Earl of Wickthorpe, whose shooting-box must be somewhere in this neighbourhood. Home Guardsmen of the neighbourhood had arrived at the farmhouse, and one of them hurried to telephone the Duke of Hamilton's estate. This Duke, as it happened, was a Wing-Commander of the R.A.F., and was not at home; instead, there was a group of B4 agents at the place, knowing that Hess was coming, and ready to take him in charge. It was they who had set this trap and baited it—and they had caught the biggest prize of the war !

XII

The first word that came to Wickthorpe Castle was from Gerald Albany, Cedd's friend in the Foreign Office. It was early in the morning and Gerald was telephoning from his bedroom. "Cedd, what is this I hear about you and Hess ?"

"Me and Hess ? What do you mean ?" His lordship had had plenty of time to rehearse his role.

"Have you heard that Hess has flown to Scotland in a plane ?"

"Good God, man ! What are you saying ?"

"Came down in a parachute. He says he was looking for you at your shooting-box."

"Gerald, the man must be insane. I never saw him in my life."

"You haven't written to him, or sent him any messages ?"

"Absolutely not."

"Somebody has probably told him that you favoured an understanding. You are positive you haven't had anything to do with it ?"

"Nothing—unless of course you count the fact that Lanny Budd has talked to him. And you must not mention that."

"There will probably be somebody out to see you about it before long. The whole thing seems very mysterious, and I suspect there's more to it than I have been told. I advise you to be extremely careful in talking about it."

"There is absolutely nothing that I can say, except what I have

dinner at home; he might be the centre of the world's greatest sensation one minute from now, or he might never be heard of again. In short, there was nothing to do but wait until the thunderbolt had fallen, and then you would know where it had hit—unless it happened to hit you !

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On May 9, the day Lanny received the four-word note, the Number Three Nazi had gone to Augsburg in Southern Bavaria, to deliver an address to the workers in the great Messerschmitt plane factory there. He took the occasion to inspect some improvements in the Me-110; he had taken a solo flight in this new fighter, designated "F," and was so pleased that he had decided to enjoy another flight on the next day. He spent the night with his friend Willi Messerschmitt, and on the following afternoon he appeared wearing the uniform of a captain of the Luftwaffe. He made sure that there was a tankful of gas, and that the guns of the plane were unloaded. Then he took off—and the worried Willi never saw either him or the plane again.

The adventurer must have flown northward, avoiding the Channel, which the German flyers called *Niemandswasser*—No Man's Water. He crossed the North Sea and approached Scotland from the east. Was it by accident or design that this same hour was chosen for one of the fiercest bombing attacks upon London? Some five hundred tons were unloaded, and as a result the most intense activity existed in the underground plotting room of the R.A.F. Fighter Command. New waves of bombers were being reported every few minutes, and when an isolated station on the eastern coast of Scotland announced an unidentified plane it was naturally guessed that it must be British. A few minutes later came a second report: the solitary plane had failed to identify itself, and its speed proved it to be a fighter.

That Scottish coast was a long way off, and fighter planes didn't get there—not if they were expecting to get back. In the plotting room of the Fighter Command was a large table that was a map, and when a hostile plane was detected a red pin was stuck in, with a tiny red arrow indicating the direction of the plane. For British fighters to take off in pursuit of such a plane was a matter of seconds, but in this case the defenders received an order never before and perhaps never since given in this war: "Force him down, but under no circumstances shoot at him!" Two Hurricanes were soon on the trail of the plane, and the air was full of radio: "Don't shoot him down! Don't fire a shot!" The pursuing pilots could hardly believe their ears.

The stranger got almost all the way across Scotland, to the west

coast. The petrol supply gave out before it quite reached its goal, and the flyer took to his parachute. Striking the ground, he wrenched one ankle, and by the time he had managed to extricate himself from the parachute cords, there was a farmer standing over him with a pitchfork, demanding to know whether he was British or enemy. His reply was that he was a "friendly German," and unarmed, so the farmer helped him to the house. He gave the name of Alfred Horn, and said that he wanted to see the Duke of Hamilton, whose great estate was near by; or if the Duke was not at the estate, he wanted to see the Earl of Wickthorpe, whose shooting-box must be somewhere in this neighbourhood. Home Guardsmen of the neighbourhood had arrived at the farmhouse, and one of them hurried to telephone the Duke of Hamilton's estate. This Duke, as it happened, was a Wing-Commander of the R.A.F., and was not at home; instead, there was a group of B4 agents at the place, knowing that Hess was coming, and ready to take him in charge. It was they who had set this trap and baited it—and they had caught the biggest prize of the war !

XII

The first word that came to Wickthorpe Castle was from Gerald Albany, Caddy's friend in the Foreign Office. It was early in the morning and Gerald was telephoning from his bedroom. "Caddy, what is this I hear about you and Hess ?"

"Me and Hess ? What do you mean ?" His lordship had had plenty of time to rehearse his role.

"Have you heard that Hess has flown to Scotland in a plane ?"

"Good God, man ! What are you saying ?"

"Came down in a parachute. He says he was looking for you at your shooting-box."

"Gerald, the man must be insane. I never saw him in my life."

"You haven't written to him, or sent him any messages ?"

"Absolutely not."

"Somebody has probably told him that you favoured an understanding. You are positive you haven't had anything to do with it ?"

"Nothing—unless of course you count the fact that Lanny Budd has talked to him. And you must not mention that."

"There will probably be somebody out to see you about it before long. The whole thing seems very mysterious, and I suspect there's more to it than I have been told. I advise you to be extremely careful in talking about it."

"There is absolutely nothing that I can say, except what I have

told you. The Red newspapers have been associating Wickthorpe along with Cliveden, as supposed-to-be appeasers, and maybe Hess's agents have swallowed that and reported to him that I would be the right person to approach. But it's the maddest thing I ever heard of in my life."

So there it was. Caddy and his wife, who hadn't slept very much, talked it over and then called Lanny to the Castle. There was not a word over the radio or in the morning papers; obviously, security was involved, and the Government would wait until they had got all the data and prepared a story to suit them. Lanny was advised to go to his cottage and keep himself inconspicuous, which he did.

In the course of the morning came two men who identified themselves as representatives of Intelligence, and they gave his lordship a respectful but thorough grilling. When Caddy denied that he had ever sent any messages, directly or indirectly, to Rudolf Hess, he was taking a risk, for Hess might have stated that Lanny Budd brought such messages. However, Caddy would say that Hess was lying, and Lanny, if he was ever put on the griddle, would say that he had merely reported to Hess the opinions he had heard Caddy expressing to guests at the Castle. Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practise to deceive!

This was Saturday morning, and week-end guests were coming. Lanny said: "Someone will surely have heard the rumours, and they won't want to talk about anything else. Because they know that I am Rudi's friend, they will make me a target for questions. So perhaps I had better go back to town."

Irma said: "I hate to send you back under the bombs, Lanny." But there wasn't very much grief in her tone, and Lanny knew it was an *au revoir*.

He told her: "I have business in New York. I'll wait in London just long enough so that I won't seem to be running away."

"Do, for God's sake, be careful what you say, Lanny!"

"I have got my lessons down pat," he told her. He didn't say what a skilful liar he had become, or how he hated it. What a relief when the beast of Nazi-Fascism breathed out its last poisonous breath, and a P.A. could become an honest man again, and say what he really thought! Would he have forgotten how?

XIII

He packed his belongings and went up to town. All the rest of Saturday he stayed in his hotel; he read all the Sunday papers, but still not a hint about a mysterious Alfred Horn who had landed by

parachute in Scotland. Wartime secrecy was like a great blanket laid down over this sceptred isle, this precious stone set in the silver sea.

Until Sunday mid-morning. Then the telephone in the room rang, and there were two gentlemen to see Mr. Budd: Mr. Fordyce and Mr. Alderman. The operator didn't say "from B4," but many voices said it in Lanny's brain. He requested that the gentlemen should be brought up, for of course the conversation would have to be private.

Mr. Fordyce was middle-aged, somewhat rotund, well educated, and presumably a university man. Mr. Alderman was younger, and more grim; he did little talking but much watching, and Lanny guessed that he was the athletic member of the team, on chance that the suspicious person might attempt resistance or flight. But Lanny, a charmer from way back, soon convinced them that he enjoyed hearing himself talk. He had the advantage in that he knew more than they knew, or at any rate more than they knew he knew.

They informed him that they were from Intelligence and showed him their badges; he assured them he was happy to meet them, and would answer all their questions to the best of his ability. He realized, he said, that he had laid himself open to suspicion by coming from Germany. Yes, he had left there less than a month ago. He told about his business, which he had carried on for many years; he had a portfolio with correspondence about paintings he had bought for clients in the States; the paintings were in the hotel vault and he would be happy to show them—very lovely, and positively not war loot, having been in Germany for a century or two. Yes, he had met Reichskanzler Hitler; had known him for some fifteen years. Yes, he knew Reichsmarschall Göring, and also Reichsminister Hess; he had sold paintings for Göring, long before the war, and he had carried on psychic experiments with Hess.

Questioned along another line, the art expert explained that he took very little interest in the war; that was not his field. But he had met important people all over Europe. He happened to be the son of Robert Budd, of Budd-Erling, and had been his father's assistant for almost thirty years. When World War I had broken out, the father had been caught in Paris without a secretary, and the son at the age of fourteen had answered telephone calls, decoded cablegrams, received visitors, and shared all the secrets of the European representative of Budd Gunmakers. "You understand, gentlemen, my father is now working day and night fabricating fighter planes for Britain, and building immense factories in which to fabricate still more planes. If it should happen that I picked up some information on this subject in Germany and took it back to my father, that is a matter which you will surely not expect me to talk about."

XIV

This duel of wits went on for a couple of hours. B4 had done a quick job on Lanny Budd—or else they had been watching him for some time. They knew about his visits to Vichy, and to Paris and Madrid and Lisbon. Why had he stayed so long in each place, and whom had he seen there? Lanny had his story, carefully studied and many times rehearsed; but somehow it didn't altogether satisfy the suspicious Mr. Fordyce. "It would appear, Mr. Budd, that when you go to a city you are more interested to visit the political personalities than the artists and art collectors."

"I visit both," replied Lanny. "It is through my father's lifelong friendship with political personalities that I am able to get introductions and privileges of travel. When I went from Vichy to the Cap d'Antibes to see my mother, I travelled on my own and it cost me nearly ten thousand francs. But the second time, I called on Admiral Darlan, whom my mother and father have known for some twenty years, and the Admiral put me on a government plane to Marseilles."

"And your interests are purely artistic and social? You don't ever by any chance carry political messages?"

"It is a question of phraseology, Mr. Fordyce. Admiral Darlan and Marshal Pétain tell me what they think; and when I come to visit my little daughter at Wickthorpe Castle, I find that visitors there are interested to learn what these important Frenchmen have told me. Naturally I do not refuse to talk. I believe in peace and mutual understanding, and say so wherever I go. If you have the idea that I am a paid agent, let me inform you that I have never received one farthing, one sou, or one pfennig, for the carrying of what you call 'political messages.'"

"But you sell art works for political personalities, and receive large fees from them?"

"I receive the customary ten per cent commission on sales, mostly from the purchaser, and never from both sides. As a rule my clients are wealthy Americans, and they pay the commission. When Herr Hitler asked me to find him a couple of Defreggers in Vienna, he paid the commission. That was prior to the war."

"You spoke of selling the paintings of Marcel Detaze."

"Marcel was my mother's second husband, and died in battle for France twenty-three years ago. He left a couple of hundred paintings, which are the joint property of my mother, of my half-sister Marceline, and of myself. I have been selling them as occasions arise."

"Our information is that Marceline Detaze is dancing in a night club in Berlin. Is that so?"

"She was dancing there. What she is doing at the moment I am not sure."

"Did you see her when you were in Berlin ?"

"I was told that she was somewhere near the eastern front, with her friend Captain Oskar von Herzenberg. I am not pleased by that friendship and made no attempt to see her."

"But you saw her in Paris, where that friendship began ?"

"Oskar is the son of Graf von Herzenberg, who was connected with the German Embassy in Paris, and whom I have known for some time."

XV

Yes, indeed, they had done a thorough job on this son of Budd-
Erling, and it was evident that they were extremely suspicious of him. Lanny wondered where they had got their data. From Caddy and Irma ? From Hess ? From Lord Beaverbrook ? From some of the many guests at Wickthorpe over the previous week-end ? It was to be assumed that at least one of them would be an informer, reporting to B4 on the doings of the appeasement clique. Also, many socially prominent persons had fled from Paris to England, and these, too, might be useful in affording information to the British authorities.

Mr. Fordyce had so far avoided showing any special interest in Lanny's dealings with Rudolf Hess. But Lanny could be sure that this was the occasion for the inquest; so he told about the Deputy Führer's interest in psychic matters, and how they had together consulted the famed Professor Präfenik in Berlin, and how Lanny had brought the Polish medium, Madame Zyszynski, to Berchtesgaden to try some séances. That made quite a story, involving many of the departed Nazis and pre-Nazis: Bismarck and Hindenburg; Gregor Strasser, murdered in the Blood Purge; Dietrich Eckart, the Führer's old crony whose bust was in the *Braune Haus* in Munich.

"So the basis of your friendship with Hess is the spirits, Mr. Budd ?" Was there a slight touch of irony in the question ?

"I don't say that they are spirits, Mr. Fordyce. They call themselves spirits, but I am always careful to state that I don't know what they are. They made their appearance, and they say things that the medium cannot normally know; to me they are a psychological mystery, and I wish some scientist would find out what they are and tell me."

"You think that Hess is such a scientist ?"

"Alas, no, I am afraid he is a dupe most of the time. My interest in him has been due in part to the fact that he so ardently desires an

understanding with Britain. You know, doubtless, that he was born in Alexandria and received an English education."

"Yes, we have a dossier on him."

"I have no means of knowing how much you know. Hess told me that the Führer has made up his mind to attack Russia next month, and he, that is Hess, was frantic to get a settlement with England before that time. He even went so far as to say that he might fly here in an effort to contact friends who were sympathetic to his ideas."

"What did you tell him on that subject?"

"I told him that the idea was fantastic, and that I was afraid he would be shot. He answered that he would come in uniform and in an unarmed plane."

"Did you tell anybody in England about this?"

"I had been told it under a pledge of secrecy. I never took the idea seriously—I mean, I didn't think he would do it. If he was unarmed, he couldn't do any harm except to himself. I am wondering now, has he by any chance come?"

"I am not permitted to answer questions, Mr. Budd; but if you read the newspapers, you may get your answer to-morrow morning."

XVI

At the conclusion of this interview the sceptical Mr. Fordyce informed the American that unfortunately it would be necessary for him to be held under what was technically known as "house arrest." They would have to ask him to remain in this hotel room until the authorities had had time to consider Mr. Fordyce's report and decide about the case. The telephone would be removed, and Mr. Alderman or some other representative of Intelligence would remain on duty outside the door. Lanny smiled amiably and said: "What if there is an air-raid alarm?" The unsmiling answer was that Mr. Alderman would accompany him to the shelter. No visitors would be permitted and no mail coming or going; but he would be permitted to order meals to his room, and to have newspapers.

Lanny wasn't worried about the outcome, for he guessed what it was going to be. Three or four hours later the well-mannered agent returned, and informed him with sincere regrets that it was the decision of the authorities that they could no longer permit him to remain in Britain, or to return there until the war was over, and perhaps later. Politeness required Lanny to show distress, but inwardly he was amused. "How am I to see my little daughter?" he inquired, and all Mr. Fordyce could suggest was that he might take his little daughter

to the States, or meet her in some other country if he wished; under no circumstances might he return to the British Isles.

"And how am I to travel?" inquired the undesirable personality.

"That is a matter for your own choice. How do you prefer?"

"I greatly prefer to fly."

"Very well, it will be arranged."

"The sooner the better, for me."

"Quite so, Mr. Budd. What route do you choose?"

"Say by Ireland and Bermuda?"

"Unfortunately, we have no control over Eire. How would Iceland and Newfoundland do?"

"Fine," said Lanny. "I had a yachting trip by that route twelve years ago." Lanny was tickled to death, for he was all ready to go and this gave him A-1 priority. Some military man or diplomat would be kicked off, and he would take the seat! And all without having to move a finger!

"You understand," said the Intelligence man, "the trip will be at your expense."

"Oh, surely. How shall I get the money from the bank and where shall I pay it?"

"You will be escorted. The plane will undoubtedly leave in the morning. I will notify you as soon as I have made arrangements."

"Thank you very much," said the P.A. "Let me add that I appreciate the courtesy you have shown in this unfortunate matter."

"Not at all, Mr. Budd."

The agent rose to leave, and Lanny couldn't resist a small bit of devilment. "Permit me to make a proposal, Mr. Fordyce. A wager."

"A wager, Mr. Budd?"

"Just a small one. If I am not in England within three months from to-day, I will remit you a fiver, and you can take your lady to dinner and a show. On the other hand, if I am back again you will blow me to a dinner."

The other looked at him sharply. Then, after a pause: "I suppose you are meaning to tell me that we are making a mistake in this matter."

Lanny grinned. "That is something about which I have to leave you to speculate. But how about my wager?"

"I'm afraid it wouldn't be quite what you Americans call 'protocol,' Mr. Budd; but if you do come, I hope you will not fail to let me know."

Who ever said that the English have no sense of humour?

BOOK FIVE

A TIDE IN THE AFFAIRS OF MEN

16

'Gainst Female Charms

I

ON the day that Lanny left England, the newspapers featured the startling tidings that Rudolf Hess had dropped down upon the soil of Scotland, but not one word about what he had come for, or what was being done with him. So all the imaginations in the world were turned loose. Was he fleeing from the wrath that he saw was to come? Had he quarrelled with his Führer, and was he now revealing his Führer's secrets? Did this mean a break in Nazi morale, and was it the beginning of the end? Or had the Führer sent him? Had the accident of a sprained ankle been the means of unveiling efforts of the old-time appeasers of Britain to make terms with Germany? There were nearly as many guesses as guessers.

And when Lanny's plane had flown him through the springtime fogs of the far north and landed him safely on Long Island, he bought more newspapers and discovered that it was the same in this half of the world. The British authorities had had no more to say; the Nazis had announced officially that the Deputy Führer had for a long time been suffering from a nervous disorder and that his unauthorized flight meant that he was definitely irresponsible. Could that be true, or was it just Hitler's alibi? And what would be the effect of it upon the German people? Certainly it must leave them bewildered and anxious; it must be a great blow to their cause. A madman can talk, and may reveal secrets. What was the Führer's most trusted friend saying to his captors?

Lanny's duty, as always, was to phone Washington for an appointment; while waiting for it to be arranged he was free to call his father and report that he was safe. Robbie took only enough time to say how glad he was to hear Lanny's voice, then asked: "What on earth does this news from Scotland mean?"

"It means that the Nazis were trying to make a deal, and they got fooled."

"Did Mr. Big know about it?"

"It is possible that he did; I can't say. I'll tell you when I see you." That was all, over the telephone. When the father heard that Lanny was going to Washington, he said: "Don't fail to stop off and see Reverdy on your way back. We have gone into big business together. He will tell you about it." Lanny smiled, knowing what "big business" he, Lanny, was supposed to do in Green Spring Valley!

His appointment with the President was for the usual hour that night, and he had barely time to call a taxi and get to the airport. Some large magnificent business-man had been thrown off, and stood there by the plane, fuming and fussing, for he thought that *his* business was important too, and who the devil had taken his place, and was this a free country or wasn't it?

That was the way with travel between New York and Washington in these days of undeclared war; the twelve billion dollars voted by Congress had completed a job which the New Deal had begun, of shifting the capital of America from Wall Street to the offices of Washington bureaucrats, and traffic between the two cities had outgrown all the existing facilities. First Lanny couldn't get a taxi, and then he couldn't get a room in the Mayflower Hotel, where he usually stopped. After he got a room in a smaller place, he had barely time to bathe and shave, and to get a bite to eat before it was time to go strolling on the street and be picked up by those two men in a car. When he remarked to Baker: "These must be strenuous times in Washington," the heartfelt answer was: "You said it!"

II

So Lanny entered once more that bedroom which had come to be the most interesting spot in the world to him. If it had not been for pictures he saw in the papers, he might have believed that Franklin Roosevelt spent all his time reclining in an old-fashioned mahogany bed with a blue spread, a reading table beside it with a lamp and a stack of documents, a smaller stack on the bed, and often one on the occupant's lap. Lanny might have believed that the "Governor" never wore anything but a blue-and-white-striped pongee pyjama suit, and either a crew-necked sweater or a blue cape. Always he leaned over and held out a firm right hand, and always there was a grin on his features and some joshing remark. He loved his friends and enjoyed seeing them, and he never put on any "side," or looked solemn unless it was a truly solemn occasion.

This time there was a joke about Lanny's covering so much of the earth. "The only man in the world who travels more than my wife!" Then the Chief said: "Shoot the works!" and Lanny opened up like one of those "Chicago pianos."

First, about Hess. Lanny had reported to F.D. that the flight was to take place; in fact he had been the only one—not even Churchill had known it, and so it was a great feather in a P.A.'s cap. The story he told now fitted perfectly with what F.D. already knew, and the great man said: "You get one hundred per cent score on that job." When Lanny told how he had been bounced from Britain, the President threw back his head and gave one of those hearty laughs which had helped to keep him alive through eight years of political and military conflict. "Golly!" he exclaimed. "I'll have to tell Winston about it!" Then he added, seriously: "I'll fix it so that you can go back and have your dinner with Mr. Fordyce."

Lanny said: "I hope you can, for England is a sort of base of operations for me. Also, I pass on a lot of news to my friend Rick, and he gets it into the papers in various quiet ways."

"I talked with Winston just a while ago; he's an owl, you know, and stays up till all hours. You provided me with a ten-strike on the old boy. I told him two or three weeks ago that Hess was going to fly to England, and he replied that it was a crazy report, and he didn't even bother to check on it with his secret services. So the news knocked the wind clean out of him."

Said Lanny: "I take it I'm correct in my idea that his B4 had planned the whole thing from the beginning?"

"Absolutely! They had been writing letters to Hess in the name of various important Englishmen. And did Winston give his Intelligence a dressing down when he discovered what they had been up to!"

"Not on behalf of Hess, I hope."

"No, but of the Englishmen. It wasn't considered to be cricket to use their names."

Lanny knew that his Chief liked to talk, so he ventured: "Tell me what has happened since. Has Rudi talked?"

"He's been interviewed by several of the men who were supposed to be writing to him. They have all been told to play the game, so Hess thinks he is in the midst of important diplomatic negotiations. That is why the matter is being kept so closely under wraps. Don't you say anything about it."

"Surely not," Lanny replied. "It would be bad policy for me even to know about the case—or any case that gets a lot of publicity. Some reporter might get the idea to trace me down!"

III

The most urgent subject at the moment was that of Russia. Lanny reported that it was taken for granted by all the Nazis he had talked to that the attack would begin in about six weeks. F.D. said that his

own information confirmed this, the German armies were being mobilized all along the border between the two countries. "I got your message," he said, "and I had it passed on to Oumansky. He pretended not to believe it, and he still keeps up that bluff; but my guess is he has a bad case of the jitters when he gets alone by himself in the Embassy. Tell me what you think about how that attack will go."

"Hitler is absolutely certain that he can roll over the Red Army in a month, or two at the outside. I am told that the *Oberkommando* is divided. Some talk about the enormous size of Russia, and the mud, and then the snow and bitter cold. They remember Napoleon, and have nightmares. Hitler, of course, is the gambler, the plunger—and he is the one who has the last word."

"What do you think yourself?"

"Your guess is better than mine, Governor. The Red Army men hate the Nazis and will fight like the very devil. But I am worried about their transportation, and about their staff work. So few of their commanders have had experience; and you know, they didn't show up very well in Finland."

"They killed off so many of their best commanders, I am told."

"It's hard to know what to believe about that. If you accept what the Communists tell you, the men who were shot were German sympathizers, and wouldn't have been of much use to Stalin in the coming crisis."

"The Soviets will hold out, whatever happens?"

"Hitler has made that certain by his denunciation of Bolshevism; it's a life and death matter with every Red leader. They will fight a defensive war, and fall back—all the way to the Urals, if necessary. They will surely not give up."

"That is what Oumansky assures us. Do you know him?"

"I can't afford to associate with the Reds any more. I'm a Nazi-Fascist, and believe me, Governor, I couldn't stick it out if it wasn't for these visits to you."

"Well, come whenever you feel like it; the latch-string is out. And by the way, Lanny, didn't you tell me that Jesse Blackless is your uncle?"

"Yes, my mother's elder brother."

"Did you know that he's in this country?"

"I haven't heard from him since he skipped out of France."

"He's been in Russia. The State Department didn't want to let him come here, since it appears that he had taken French citizenship in order to get elected to the Chamber of Deputies."

"I knew that."

"The case was appealed to me, and I said: 'Let him come.'"

decided largely on your report that Hitler means to attack them. That will make them a sort of left-handed allies, and we shall have to get our public used to them."

"Every Communist in the world will be for the war, Governor. I can speak for Uncle Jesse on that, I am sure."

"He was in New York the last I heard, and I had somebody talk with him. It might be a good idea for you to have a meeting on the Q.T. He would probably tell you more than he would tell a stranger."

"He always has," replied the nephew. "He's a rare old boy, and I got my start in social thinking from him. He's something of a saint—though he wouldn't take that for a compliment."

"We shouldn't like the saints in the least if we met them at a Washington cocktail party," remarked F.D. with one of his grins.

IV

The busy man wanted to know about his agent's programme. The answer was: "Unless you have something urgent in mind, I'll wait until Hitler makes his next move. That will make a lot of difference in the world situation." When F.D. said: "All right," Lanny replied: "I'll have a talk with my Red uncle and if he has anything of interest, I'll send you a report in care of Baker. Also, I'll see Forrest Quadratt and tell him a little about Hess. That will impress him greatly and he'll tell me what he is up to. Do you want me to do anything about those rascals who are plotting to put you on the shelf?"

"No," was the reply, "I think I have them under observation. Europe is still your field."

"I promised the Lord of San Simeon that I would keep him informed as to how that little matter was progressing. I might run out there again and see what his mood is."

"California is a pleasant place to visit," replied the other, smiling. "But I think that old alligator has passed the age where he talks frankly to anybody on earth."

"He knows his own heart too well to believe that anybody on earth can be trusted."

Lanny had his orders, and it was time for him to depart, but the Boss wouldn't have it that way. "You only come about once in six months," he said. "Stay and entertain me for a while."

"I see that stack of documents——" began the visitor, apologetically.

"I can't tell you how I hate them!" exclaimed F.D., and gave them a little push. "Bureaucrats squabbling over power and precedence! You have to try to administer something on a large scale before you really know human nature: how almost impossible it is to

find a man who will do his job and not get into a row with other people who are trying to do theirs."

"You are doing new things, Governor, and you have jostled people out of their old ruts. It takes time to get them settled in new ones."

"That's it. But meantime all they can think of is to come running to me to settle their disputes. They send me long arguments to show why they have to have control of a certain department, and then somebody gets wind of it and rushes to explain why *he* has to have it."

"Everybody marvels about the way you manage to keep cheerful, Governor!"

"That's the audience that sits out in the soft, plush-covered seats and enjoys the show. But when you get back into the dressing-room of the star you hear a different story."

"The show must go on, Governor! And for you there is no 'stand-in'—as they call it in Hollywood. Surely not now, in the midst of this crisis."

"My enemies accuse me of loving power, of wanting to be a dictator, to perpetuate myself, and all that stuff. Do you know what I would really like to do?"

"I suppose it would be to retire to Hyde Park and grow Christmas trees."

"That as a side line; the real thing would be to write history. I said that to Winston the other night, and he has the same dream. Also, he likes to build brick walls!"

"And Hitler! Do you know what Hitler is longing to do?"

"What?"

"To design beautiful buildings. The only trouble is, they are all big buildings—so big that there wouldn't be room enough for them all in Germany."

"I suppose that is what he means by *Lebensraum*," countered the President.

v

Next morning Lanny telephoned, as was his duty, to Baltimore, and was assured that the doors of the Holdenhurst home were open to welcome him. He took the train, and was met by the talkative chauffeur, who told him on the way the news of the family and the neighbourhood. Most improper, but then Lanny invited it by sitting alongside the man, and by being genial in manner, whereas he should have "frozen" the fellow at the first sign of presumption. But there were big factories in Baltimore, including an aeroplane plant, all busy with war work and clamouring for more labour; so even the richest and most important people tried to keep friends with their "help."

That twelve billion dollars was making a great difference in American society. And there were more billions to come !

It was the top of the season in Green Spring Valley ; the trees had on their bright new costumes, and the rolling hills were green to match. The little brook which ran through the Holdenhurst estate sang gaily, and the fish leaped in the little pond in which you could catch your own breakfast if you had the notion. The red brick mansion appeared to have had its walls washed, and the white wood-work had been freshly painted, as if in Lanny's honour.

Certainly it was that way in the heart of Lizbeth—not the paint, but the honour. The smiles were fresh, and the gleam in the lovely brown eyes. She had grown more mature in the two and a half years Lanny had known her ; he had to admit that nobody could be nicer to be with. Her whole manner seemed to say : " What is the matter with me ? " His manner would have been churlish indeed if it had not responded : " Nothing whatever, my dear."

The most pathetic thing you could imagine ; she had evidently been trying to figure the matter out, why it was that her *beau idéal* and ideal beau was behaving so abnormally. She had decided, perhaps with the aid of her father, that she was frivolous and ignorant, whereas he was a serious and learned gentleman. He read books and thought about the problems of the world, and how could she interest him with chatter about the parties she had been to, and what the members of her " younger set " had said and done ? She had decided to try to be worthy of him ; she was listening every day to radio commentators on what was happening in the world, and she was looking at the war maps in the newspapers, to learn where Bulgaria was, and Abyssinia, and Libya, and all the other queer-sounding places. More significant yet, she had employed a lady teacher from one of the art schools, and they had been going to lectures on art and visiting the Baltimore galleries together. *Les Femmes Savantes !*

Now she wanted, not to display this learning, but just to have it certified by a real authority. Instead of taking Lanny to the Country Club to show him off to her smart friends, she drove him in to the galleries and invited him to turn loose that flow of discourse which had earned him over a period of some eighteen years close to half a million dollars. It was the best way in the world to make an impression on him ; it was like saying : " I am ready to be whatever you want ; and if you marry me you won't be dragged to dinner dances, but will have time to meditate and rehearse what you are going to say to Mr. Winstead or Mrs. Ford the next day ! "

Lanny found it deeply touching ; and of course it made him think about her. Why on earth had she chosen him, over the many swains who were besieging her from every noon to every midnight ? It must

have been a case of that alarming thing called love at first sight. Since she had met him at Emily Chattersworth's luncheon at Sept Chênes she had apparently never wavered in her determination that he was the man for her. Then he had had more than twice her years, and as they stood at this moment he had almost exactly twice. He had a previous marriage to his discredit, and would make her a stepmother—but apparently she was too young to realize the perils of that relationship. No, Irma Barnes in her eyes had been a selfish woman who had wanted to become a countess, and it couldn't possibly have been any fault of the kind and genial and wise Lanny Budd.

This kind and genial and wise one had sat in at enough family scenes to be able to imagine what had gone on in the Holdenhurst family: the efforts of the parents to dissuade her, and her counter arguments, her defence of a much-travelled and widely read man who knew all the great people of the earth and was so much more interesting than anybody who had ever lived in this overgrown port on an estuary of the Chesapeake Bay—famous for oysters and shad and devilled crabs, but less so for musicians and poets and painters, and never for dukes and duchesses! Lanny had never seen Lizbeth in a tantrum, but he could guess that she had a fountain of tears; and then, when she had got her own way with two fond unhappy parents, she would wipe her eyes and emerge as the debutante heiress, waiting for her chosen Prince Charming to step from his horseless chariot.

VI

Lanny told himself that his predicament was owing to the uncomfortable business of politics, and to the war that was going on in the world, not merely the war between Germany and Britain, with the United States as a lend-lease adjunct, but the class war that was rending modern society, and of which the armed conflict was but an early stage. Lanny had pledged his faith and his hopes to the workers, the disinherited of the earth. And where would the daughter of Reverdy Johnson Holdenhurst stand in that battlefield? Would she follow him there as humbly and as cheerfully as she accepted his judgments concerning Rembrandt and Turner, van Gogh and Matisse and the rest? Or would she be horrified and outraged, as Irma had been? Would she weep and exclaim: "You have cheated me! You should have told me! It was my right to know!"

Of course it was her right; it is every woman's right to know what she is marrying, and what her future life is to be. Lanny couldn't tell her; but in his imagination, he could go through a number of scenes in which he told her. In most of them, she assured him that

she would follow him in whatever he believed to be right, regardless of its effect upon herself and her fortune. But even that didn't satisfy him, for before he had asked Irma to marry him he had told her that he was a Socialist, and she had said that that didn't worry her. Irma had been at that time just about Lizbeth's age—far too young to realize what it would mean to be the wife of a well-to-do friend of the workers, a "parlour Pink" as they were derisively called.

It meant having unpresentable friends who had the right to come to your home at all hours of the day and night, sometimes fleeing from the police, and invariably wanting money for "the cause." Many of them were far from being pure idealists; on the contrary, they were jealous and embittered personalities who would bite the hand that was in the act of feeding them. It took a lot of social insight to understand the system which had produced these distorted souls. Was it possible to imagine Lizbeth Holdenhurst as ever possessing such understanding?

In one of these imaginary scenes Lanny explained matters to her, and she told him frankly that she didn't think she could stand that sort of life; she hadn't been trained for it, and she didn't like dirty and ill-bred people—especially when they promised to deprive her of her money and reduce her to their own level of servantless and undignified commonness. But she respected Lanny's right to try to reduce himself to that level if he wished, and she promised to keep secret the fact that he was doing it. He went off—still in his imagination—wondering if she would keep this promise. Might she not decide that he was a traitor to his class, an enemy of public safety who deserved to be exposed? Might she not at the least decide that it was her right to explain to her parents the sudden change in her attitude and hopes? There is nothing more humiliating to a rich and somewhat spoiled daughter of privilege than to be turned down by a man; and was it human to imagine that Lizbeth would keep hidden from her most intimate friends the fact that it was she who had turned Lanny down?

The standard accepted way to worm the truth out of secret agents is with a woman; and Lanny Budd, who prided himself upon being a super-spy, so high-brow, so haughty, was about to fall for the cheapest and commonest of enemy devices. He decided, for the tenth or twelfth time, that he was playing with fire in a powder barrel; he must stop driving with this daughter of the Holdenhursts, looking at pictures with her, playing tennis with her, even talking to her; he must stop showing human interest in her or kindness to her! And straightway his imagination carried him off into a scene in which he told her that he couldn't see her again, that he could never marry her, nor even tell her why. She burst into tears and flung herself into his

arms and told him that she could not live without him, that if he left her she would kill herself, or go into an Episcopal nunnery. There had been many such scenes in Lanny's imagination, and it was getting quite dangerous; he was convinced that the real one might break at any moment, and how the devil would he meet it ?

VII

He had a long talk with Reverdy, and told him about conditions in Europe and in Britain; what Hitler and Göring and Hess had said, and what Lanny thought the Hess flight meant—but not saying that Hess had told him. Hitler was undoubtedly going to invade Russia next month—but again Lanny didn't say that Hitler had admitted it. The P.A. had learned a lesson in Toulon, and another from Mr. Fordyce, and from now on wouldn't talk quite so freely in polite society, wouldn't be quite so brilliant, such a shining mark for underground partisans and B4 agents and other people on his own side !

It was safe for him to tell this Baltimore capitalist that it was going to be a long war, and that nobody was making a mistake in putting money into fighter planes. A huge war machine was going to be constructed, the greatest the world had ever seen; America was going to become the great arsenal of democracy—never knowing who had invented that phrase ! Lanny had come to understand his host by now, and was not deceived by his manner of placid indolence, or by his valetudinarian talk. Before Reverdy went off on one of those half-year sea jaunts, he made sure where every dollar of his money was placed and what work it was going to perform in his absence. Quietly, carefully, he studied market conditions and world prospects, and made up his mind and placed his investments.

He had devised an armour-clad device for thwarting the income-tax laws, by dividing his fortune among a carefully selected group of his future heirs, some forty of them; they owned the securities and received the income, but did not have the use of it; they left it for Reverdy to reinvest for their benefit after his death. By this means a supposedly retired semi-invalid accomplished two purposes: he avoided the higher tax schedules, the so-called surtaxes, which he considered outright confiscation, a devilish device to break down the "private-enterprise system" in America; and he kept for himself the control of more fluid capital than any other person he knew, or whom Robbie Budd or Lanny knew. As a rule it was only banks and insurance companies that disposed of so much money nowadays.

This yacht-sailing bank and insurance company was turning the money over to Budd-Erling Aircraft. All summer long he would study

its reports, balance sheets, contracts, payrolls, bank statements—everything; then for the winter he could go off in peace of mind, receiving only a few cablegrams at ports where he put in. This arrangement served both men, for it reduced the amount of government funds which Robbie had to accept, and both were united in fearing the Roosevelt administration as much as, if not more than, they feared the Nazis. In his youth Lanny had made jokes about the firm of "R and R," consisting of his father and Johannes Robin; now the firm had come to life again, only this time it was Robbie and Reverdy! And always it had made money faster than any other firm of which the son had knowledge.

VIII

Lanny made excuses—he hadn't seen his father yet, and he had picture business which must be completed without delay. Reverdy respected such excuses, even if his daughter didn't. Without taking a chance of being alone with Lizbeth again, the art expert took the train to New York and from there to Newcastle. He shut himself up in his father's study and revealed everything he knew that would be of any use to that "merchant of death." Lanny wasn't going to tell a single person in America about his Toulon adventure, nor about his pre-knowledge of Hess's flight, nor of the part which B4 had played therein. But he could say it was certain that Hess had come seeking peace with Britain; and he could say that the Wehrmacht was moving to the east, and what for. He could say that Britain was going to stick, beyond any question; that Churchill's position was secure, the appeasers having been driven underground. He could say that the R.A.F. had won out, and that Britain wasn't going to be invaded within any foreseeable time. The war was going on and on, and every dollar that Britain could scrape up would go into it, and every pound of steel and explosives that America would furnish on lend-lease or lease-lend. That was all the President of Budd-Eling Aircraft needed to enable him to eat heartily and sleep soundly.

He would, of course, like to have his firstborn marry the right girl. He and Esther must have talked it over in advance and decided that they had said all they could; now they just asked how he had found matters in Green Spring Valley, and when he said that everybody was well and seemed reasonably happy, and that he had taken Lizbeth to art galleries to look at paintings, they knew that he hadn't popped the question, and they didn't ask further. He was going to stick around for a while, he said; he had brought two small paintings with him and had offers of others. He would use the car, if it was all right. The father said: "Always."

Lanny had to see the new plant, of course, and express his pride in it. Such an amazing country, in which new factories arose like Jack's beanstalk or the products of Aladdin's lamp; buildings standardized, built in sections all uniform, prefabricated and put together by gangs of men with riveting machines and welding torches—three gangs, working around the clock, at night by glaring electricity. The men and women appeared from nowhere, as if they, too, were products of Aladdin's wonderful lamp; they crowded themselves into somebody's attic, or fixed up somebody's cow shed or chicken house, or worked overtime and constructed homes out of old pieces of tin and tar paper. Robbie said that getting them wasn't as simple as it sounded; he had agents at work, north, south, east, and west, telling people of the wonders of aeroplane fabrication—you had just one little thing to do and you could learn it in an hour or two, and you got around two dollars an hour even while being shown.

IX

Also, there was the matter of Esther Remsen Budd's niece; such a lovely young woman, and rich as cream, and she was going to learn to be an art expert and run a museum, not because she hoped thereby to catch Lanny, but because she thought every woman ought to have a career and not be an idler and parasite. Of course it was from Lanny that she had got the idea of old masters as a profession; but she had dug up for herself information about the wonderful Fogg Museum of Art at Harvard where they turned out art experts on the production line, just as Robbie turned out Budd-Erling 17Ks—that being the Army's new designation. Not quite so fast, of course; there wasn't the same demand for museum directors as for fighter planes, but it was part of the same American efficiency.

Lanny could imagine his father and his stepmother discussing this case, too. Since he obviously wasn't going to marry Lizbeth, it would surely be all right to let Peggy Remsen have her chance. But there mustn't be any hint that anybody had this idea; they must be all wrapped up in old masters, and perhaps Lanny would drive Peggy to New York and escort her through the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which she knew well but could always know better. For that reason it would be worth while for her to take a couple of days off from school, and let Esther invite her to lunch while Lanny was there, and see what the signs were. That is the way the marriage market is conducted in refined and elegant circles; there are no schools where it is taught, but ladies manage somehow to get a sound education in it, and conducting it is the first business of all mothers, grandmothers,

and aunts. "Doänt thou marry for munny, but goä wheer munny is !"

If Lanny wanted to visit his father's home and drive one of his father's cars—or indeed if he didn't want to be a hermit entirely—he had to play his hand in this game. He was as nice as could be to Peggy, who had everything that a modern young woman ought to have—looks and clothes, manners and speech, even a sense of humour. When her watchful aunt suggested that Lanny might give her the benefit of his point of view on what the Metropolitan contained as against what it ought to contain, Lanny felt duly honoured, and they made an extensive date; he would drive her to New York next morning, and they would spend the day in the museum, then have dinner and go to a show, and he would put her on the night train for Boston. After the lunch, when Esther got her stepson off by himself, she pressed a fifty-dollar bill into his hand and wouldn't take it back. This was her party, she insisted; she had planned it, and he would have to buy Peggy's ticket and sleeping-car berth, as well as all the other expenses. "Isn't she a nice girl?" asked the aunt, and when translated into good society it meant: "Why don't you marry her?"

Marry, marry, marry! Nobody would let Lanny alone! Here was a young woman with whom it might be a pleasure to look at paintings, provided she would be content with that. She had been well drilled, and her opinions were those generally received, but she was open-minded and could be taught; it was a pleasure to stroll with her through the long galleries of New York's immense treasury of art. This museum as a rule bought the works of dead artists, and that was a way of playing safe; they had to pay higher prices, but avoided bad guesses, and perhaps it paid in the long run. Lanny would ask his companion's opinion of this work and that, and then would gently suggest a new point of view and observe her reaction. Even though she might never become a museum curator, she would be a collector and a patron, so it was worth while to guide her and give her courage to use her own judgment.

But did lady curators and art patrons have to be married? Apparently so! Lanny could be sure that Esther had discussed him as a possible match, and that Peggy was looking him over and searching his mind, just as he was doing with hers. Life was real and life was earnest in New England, and the arts of painting and drama were vain things except as they contributed to the founding of a family and the bringing of a new generation into the world. If Lanny thought that he could be a good pal to his stepmother's niece and never contemplate matrimony, he would find that he had made the same mistake as in the case of Lizbeth Holdenhurst.

He played the perfect gentleman and poured out the treasures of

his knowledge. He fed her and took her to a proper play, not so easy to find in New York. Of course it dealt with love and marriage, and they discussed it in the light modern manner. Lanny said: "I was married once, you know; my former wife is now a countess, which suits her much better." When his companion asked: "And how does it suit *you*?" he replied: "We have a lovely little daughter, and when I go to visit the Castle, we talk about the child, and about world politics—never about the past." It was a gracious way of dodging, and Peggy had sense enough to observe it. She would call him "impenetrable," and decide that he was an intriguing personality.

A taxi took them to Grand Central Station—no use trying to use your own car in that theatre jam. Lanny saw her on board her train; a friendly handshake and assurances that they had both had a delightful day—and then he strolled out, thinking how it would be as husband of Peggy Remsen. Where and how would they live? And what would she make of his long journeys on art missions? And would he entrust her with his political secret? And what would she make of his Pink opinions?

X

On his way to the street was a news-stand loaded with every sort of reading matter that might tempt the public. So many new magazines that one couldn't remember the names. The June issues, just out, new and neat, multicoloured traps for the modern eye. Lanny stopped and glanced over the contents tables. There was a *Bluebook*, and he thought of Mary Morrow. Sure enough, there she was, the leading story, a title half English, half German: "The *Herrenvolk*." He purchased a copy and carried it to his hotel room; before undressing he sat in an easy chair and read it through.

Another of those biting satires on the Nazis at home. Again the scene was a *pension* in a provincial town. This time the narrative centred about a peasant girl, the slavey of the establishment; her name was Greta, and Lanny could guess that she might be that kind-hearted girl who had risked her life by stealing out of the Pension Baumgartner and letting Laurel Creston know that the Gestapo were raiding her room and examining the contents of her *Schreibtisch* and her *Gepäck*. But Greta was merely a glass through which we could look into the souls of half a dozen greedy and jealous members of the master race who drove this poor creature about. They were hateful and they were cruel, and each and every one was imbued with the conviction that he or she was the most perfect product yet thrown off by a blindly functioning universe composed of material atoms in perpetual inevit-

able activity. (There was a professor who explained this while he grabbed the last slice of *Leberwurst* off a platter.)

So Lanny stopped thinking about a prospective museum curator and thought instead about a present fiction writer. Here was the woman who was intellectually his mate, and whom he ought to be thinking about marrying if he was going to marry at all! This woman had the real stuff in her, and she was doing her work in her own way, not asking anybody to teach her or to help her. She hadn't waited for Lanny to reveal to her the fact that the world was out of joint, that it was full of parasites and exploiters, and that some of them had organized a criminal conspiracy against the modern world. This was the woman who deserved the prize—if Lanny was going to distribute prizes—or to *be* one!

So there started the old arguments all over again. If he should ask Laurel Creston to marry him and she consented, where would they live, and how? Where was the place in which Lanny could visit her with the certainty that nobody would recognize him? Where could she live and have any friends who wouldn't be curious about a fashionable gentleman who might or might not be her husband? Here in this vast megalopolis was the best of all places to get lost in. But where would she get her mail and how would she cash her magazine cheques? Was it conceivable that the Nazi agents who swarmed all over this city would permit a story like "*The Herrenvolk*" to appear in a popular magazine and not set out to locate the writer and find out where she got her material? Wouldn't they find a way to get her address from the magazine and wouldn't they trail her wherever she went? Of course they would; and of course they would find out who her lover was; and if he turned out to be an intimate friend of *Nummer Eins, Zwei, und Drei*—well, the things that had happened to that man in the back country of Toulon would be child's play compared to what would happen to him the next time he set foot across the borders of Germany.

But even so, before the P.A. went to sleep that night he decided that, since he had spared a full day for Lizbeth Holdenhurst and one for Peggy Remsen, common decency required that he should spare one for Laurel Creston!

XI

Next morning he called her on the telephone. "No names," he said, knowing that she would recognize his voice. "Am I interrupting a writing job?"

"Nothing urgent," she replied.

"Come out and stroll on the avenue—on the same side as your

apartment house, going north. Say in an hour." He knew that ladies have to dress.

He did not take his father's car, but a taxi—and not from in front of his hotel. He told the driver where to go, and not too fast. "I am looking for a lady—rather small size." All taxi drivers understand these matters and take an interest in them.

"There she is!" Lanny said. The cab stopped, and she stepped in without a word. "Drive around the block," he said, and made sure that nobody was following them. Then he ordered: "Take us into Central Park." When they were just inside he paid off the driver.

"Forgive this Sherlock Holmes business," he said when they were alone. "I got into serious trouble through being spied upon in France, and there are special reasons why I have to be careful in New York."

"I understand," she said, for she had guessed a lot about him. "I surely do not want to be to blame for anything going wrong."

"I read 'The *Herrenvolk*' last night, and I know that you must be a marked woman. That's why I had to make sure that neither of us was being followed. I have my father's car, and would like to take you for a good long drive, but I was afraid somebody might make note of the licence number. If now you don't mind sitting on a bench for a while, I'll bring the car here."

"We had pleasant times sitting on benches in the Tiergarten," she reminded him. "All these subterfuges and stratagems will serve me some day when I want to tell a spy story."

In half an hour Lanny was back with the car. "Where would you like to go?"—and when she replied that she had no choice, he said: "We'll go north and see what we see." They followed the east bank of the Hudson, and when they came to the village of Croton they struck into the hills. There was a great curved dam, part of the city's water system; the road wound past the reservoir and on into the hills. Nature was at her loveliest, and they admired the scenery now and then, talking between times about the world at war.

Lanny told her that he had been back in Hitlerland, and had met the Führer and his Deputy. Laurel was relieved, having feared that her own misadventure in Berchtesgaden might interfere with his work; but he told her no, he had visited Hitler's office and Hess's home, and they had not mentioned her. He gave his interpretation of the flight, the world's number-one mystery, but not saying that he had known about it in advance. He told of the coming attack upon Russia, and they discussed for a while what that was going to mean to Russia, to Britain, and to America.

Then their personal affairs. He reported on Beauty, and Baby Marcel, and Emily and Sophie and the rest of the gang. And then Green Spring Valley, and how Lizbeth and her mother and father

were. Laurel said: "They have invited me there for a couple of weeks this summer, but I'm not sure if I'll take the time off."

"It gets pretty hot in New York in midsummer," he commented.

"I stay in my little apartment under an electric fan. I am doing some writing that I hate to interrupt. Did you say anything about me to them?"

"No, I thought they might consider it strange that I hadn't mentioned you before."

"It is just as well. They would surely not approve of my getting into trouble in Germany, and probably not of what I am writing. If we ever happen to meet in their presence, let them introduce us and we'll start all over."

"Very well," he replied. "I shall be pleased to meet you."

That bit of gallantry sufficed to pass off a delicate subject. It would have been easy for her to make some remark: "Lizbeth is a very lovely girl, don't you think?" or even: "Has Lizbeth found herself a beau yet?" But no, she accepted his casual remark that her Uncle Reverdy was putting a lot of money into Budd-Erling, and left it to be supposed that that was sufficient reason for Lanny's visits. She carried reticence to an extreme, but he had to admit that he found it convenient.

XII

They had a large subject of conversation in her writings. He did not have to be reticent in regard to "The *Herrenvolk*," nor would she wish him to be. She told about other sketches she had written or had in mind. Knowing the Nazis as he did, he could suggest details, and was pleased to do so; she asked if she might make notes, and he said: "I shall be proud." She told him that her subject had become popular, and the editors were eagerly buying what she wrote. "The bombs over London have waked them up," he commented.

A still more important revelation: she was trying to get up the courage to spread her wings; she aspired not merely to sketch individual Nazis but to write a novel with a conflict of characters embodying the old and the new Germany. What did he think of the idea? Of course he thought well of it, and she invited him into the machine-shop of a fictionist's mind. He had had the same adventure years ago, when Rick had been a budding playwright; he helped her, as he had helped Rick, by suggesting types and traits. They became excited, and forgot about the landscape, and got lost on country roads, but it didn't matter, for they had no special goal. He was leading towards the east because the Berkshires lay that way, and he knew they were lovely.

They found a roadside inn and had an acceptable lunch; nobody knew them, nobody was concerned about their affairs. How pleasant if life had been all literature; if you could fight your enemies with a pen, and annihilate them with a witty sequence of dialogue! But the enemies wouldn't be satisfied with what William Blake called "mental fight"; they were dropping bombs over London, and *Der Dicke* had made a grinning remark to Lanny: "Tell your friends in New York we're going to have a way to reach them before long."

"What could he mean?" asked the woman. "Just a bluff?"

"It isn't safe to be sure that anything the Germans say is bluff. I know they are working at what is called jet propulsion, that is to say, rockets. That device is just in its infancy, and when it grows up, three thousand miles may be as one."

"But could they aim anything at that distance?"

"Who can guess what modern science may do? They might have some sort of telephoto device, and when the picture of a city comes onto the screen the bomb would be released automatically."

"Are we all going to have to live underground like the gophers?" she asked, and he answered: "Either that, or else we have to abolish competitive commercialism, and build a world on a basis of co-operation."

"Don't let my Uncle Reverdy hear you say that," she warned. "What he calls private enterprise is the only god he has."

"All right," countered Lanny with a grin. "His private enterprise shall be to put Green Spring Valley underground. The new bombs will be no respecters of class."

XIII

Another subject of conversation they would never neglect. Laurel had discovered that she was a medium, and that was the strangest thing in the world to her, and a matter for investigation in her spare time. She had a woman friend, somewhat older than herself, whom she had met in a boarding-house where she had stayed when she had come to the city in search of a career. This friend came to see her now and then in the evenings, and Laurel went into a trance, and the friend made notes of what happened. How the P.A. would have liked to be there!

The one-time international banker, Otto Kahn, had become Laurel's "steady company" in the spirit world—or the world of the subconscious mind, or whatever you chose to call it. She had never heard his spirit voice, but her friend Agnes had listened to it for long periods and made elaborate notes of what he had said. He presided

over the séances with the same easy grace that he had been wont to display at social functions in New York not long before. He had a keen sense of humour, and was immensely amused by the idea of being in the spirit world; of course it couldn't possibly be true—every enlightened person knew it was nonsense—but here he was, and what were they going to make of him? He didn't know how he had come to be here, just as he hadn't known how he had come to be on earth. His body, of course, had been born; but where had his mind come from? And where had it gone to? No place he could describe to anybody; but since he was here, they might as well enjoy the fun.

He knew a lot about what was going on in the world. How would an alert mind like his consent to be left in darkness? He made fun of the banking business, as he had done in real life, even while making millions out of it. He admitted that the game was about played out; he compared it whimsically to "freeze-out" poker; the game went on until one player had got all the chips, and that was the end. He laughed at the idea that the war debts would ever be paid. What with? Even the interest, paid in goods, would wreck the home industry of the country which received them.

Agnes had rebuked him: "You talk like a Red"; and he had answered: "I always enjoy their company." Even so, Lanny found it suspicious, for he had the idea that something deep in Laurel Creston's subconscious mind was inventing Otto Hermann Kahn out of a girlhood memory, plus some of Lanny Budd's own ideas. If her conscious mind was impelled to create Gauleiters and their cousins, why might not that same activity be going on in her "memory mind"?

But then, there was the problem of the facts which this spirit mentioned—facts that Laurel was ready to swear she had never heard and couldn't have heard. This "control" informed her with mock solemnity that he was to be treated with respect, for he had been and still was a Commander of the Legion of Honour of France, a Knight of the Order of Charles II of Spain, a Grand Officer of the Order of the Crown of Italy, a Commander of the Order of the Crown of Belgium, and an Officer of the Order of SS. Maurizio e Lazzaro of Italy. "And believe me," he declared, addressing the unknown Agnes Drury, "those things cost more money than you will ever see in all your life."

How had the subconscious mind of Laurel Creston found out all that? Assuredly her conscious mind had never heard of any except the first of these ancient and honourable institutions. Was it likely that the dignified Jewish banker had ever recited the list in the presence of a young niece of one of his clients? Here was one of the most fascinating of life's mysteries, and the two friends talked about it for a long while, exchanging experiences and theories.

With such conversation, and the viewing of a panorama of western Massachusetts, the afternoon slipped away pleasantly; they had dinner at a roadhouse, and got back to the city late at night. After Lanny had left her, as usual, near her apartment house, he drove away, reflecting: "If I should marry her I should have not merely a wife but also a first-class medium." It would be almost bigamy!

17

The Darkest Hour

I

ON the North Shore of the Sound, half-way between Newcastle and New York, the Hansi Robins had their modest home. The flowers were blooming in their garden, and tiny little sparkles were dancing over the blue water. They had two lovely children, one of them dark like the father, the other blonde like the mother. They had just come back from a concert tour of the Middle West, where large audiences had applauded them. They had all the money they wanted, and more to give away. They were young—Hansi only thirty-six and Bess thirty-three. They had health, and a great art which they practised with religious devotion. Everybody thought they were a happy couple, if such existed in the world; but apparently it didn't, for they were a tormented couple.

Lanny went to spend the day with them; they loved him, and made a holiday of his coming. He told about his travels, and a good part of what he had learned. They asked questions about *Bienvenu* and *Wickthorpe*, and about the friends they had in common. They asked about the wicked Nazis and the cowardly French collaborators, but they made few comments; they sat tight-lipped and tense, knowing that if they expressed opinions they might get into an argument, and an argument would turn into a quarrel. They lived together under the terms that never, no matter what the circumstances, did they discuss the subjects which were of the greatest interest and importance to them both. They read newspapers and magazines, but rarely spoke of what they read. If one came upon something in the way of news or opinion which seemed to him of significance, he dared not even call the other's attention to it, for that might be taken as a challenge to the other's opinion, and so might lead to controversy. Just wall your-

self and your ideas off and live with them alone; when you were with friends, let the friends do the talking !

The only thing that was really safe was music. The notes were there and offered no chance of disagreement. What would Lanny like to hear ? He asked what they were playing, and Hansi said they had been featuring Saint-Saëns, especially the *Rondo Capriccioso*. Lanny said he hadn't heard it for a long time; so they played it, and those wild skipping notes which make a test of violin technique expressed all the joy which the Hansibesses had ever felt or imagined in youth and nature and love. But in the midst of the piece would come little hints of melancholy, and Hansi's fiddle would wail, saying plainly to his brother-in-law's ears: " Oh, why, why cannot human beings understand one another, and be tolerant and kind ? "

II

There was nothing unique about this family situation; on the contrary, it was typical of what was going on in many homes, and in journals of opinion in every country where free expression was permitted. It was a split which ran right down the centre of the left-wing movement, and which, in Lanny's opinion, was responsible for the triumph of Nazi-Fascism. It was a difference of human types, set forth by the psychologist William James long before this split had occurred. There are tough-minded people and there are tender-minded people, and they do not agree about what is to be done in the world.

The tender-minded among the left-wingers called themselves Social-Democrats; they believed in social justice and hoped to get it by the patient labour of education, through the democratic process of political struggle and popular consent. But the tough-minded said: " It is a dream and will never come true; the capitalist class will never permit it to happen." They would cite cases of the politicians who had risen to power through working-class activity, and then had turned conservative and betrayed their followers: Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden, Briand and Viviani and Daladier and Laval, the vile Mussolini—a long list. No, the overthrow of the exploiters was a grim business; it would have to be done by fighting men, and the dictatorship of the proletariat was the only way. Prior to 1917 that had been just theory, evolved by Marx and Lenin; but now the world had seen it in action. " I have seen the future and it works ! " Who now, after nearly a quarter of a century, could doubt that the Soviet Union was the workers' Fatherland, and that the protection of that Fatherland was the first duty of every worker's friend ?

Such was the faith of Lanny's half-sister, the surprisingly rebellious daughter of Esther Remsen and Robbie Budd. When the rich go overboard, politically speaking, they go all the way and with all their clothes on. They have been used to having what they want, and patience is apt to be the least of their virtues. Bessie Budd had joined the Communist Party, and she followed the Party line, keeping her eyes fixed upon it so closely that she couldn't even see how it wobbled, and would be greatly irritated if you called her attention to the chart. This was a capitalist war, and the Soviet Union was keeping out of it, and it was the duty of every class-conscious worker in the world to uphold that attitude. Whichever side won, the workers of that side would gain nothing. Efforts to make distinctions between capitalist nations were just propaganda of the ruling classes; in the long run all nations would become the same, for when the workers got strong enough to threaten the power of their masters, the masters would put an end to the so-called "democracy." That was how Fascism, Nazism, Falangism, had come, and it was an inevitable stage in the development of the proletarian revolution.

Hansi took his brother-in-law off and said, with tears in his eyes: "It's utterly hopeless, Lanny. I can't stand it much longer. Bess has got so that she puts words into my mouth; she knows what I am thinking and takes offence at that. It is like walking in a field that is sowed with mines; you never know where to put your foot."

"You must make allowances for her, Hansi. History is being pretty hard on the Communists just now."

"It would be hard on anybody who tried to fit Russian theories into an American mould. Imagine having to believe that there is no difference between the filthy Nazis with their torture camps, and the police and public authorities here in America, who leave Bess free to get up on a public platform and denounce them all she pleases! And when she knows that the Nazis murdered my harmless brother and robbed my father of everything he owned! When she knows that they are torturing and killing millions of good Germans for no crime save that of belonging to my race—and the race of our children—for you know that under the Nazi theories if you are half Jewish you might as well be all Jewish."

"Bess insists that she hates the Nazis just as much as you, Hansi."

"I know. In theory the Communists do; but in practice they save all their denunciation for those who are fighting to end Nazism. To hear Bess talk you would think that Roosevelt, the war-monger, is the most dangerous man in the world."

"Yes, Hansi. I, too, have to live among wrong-headed people, and learn to bite my lips and keep silent."

"But not the person you love most in the world, Lanny!"

"Even that—when I was married to Irma. And I was prepared to stick it out. It was she who broke it up."

"I sometimes wonder if Bess is not planning to break it up, Lanny. She has been so impatient of late. We made a bargain, but she can't stick to it."

"You know the old saying, that the darkest hour is just before dawn; and I've an idea this may apply to your case. Go to your study and fiddle, and leave Bess to me for a while. I have some news for her."

III

There was a summer-house on a little point of land facing the water. It had seats inside and out, so that when the weather was cool you could sit in the sunshine and when it was hot you could sit in the shade. On this afternoon of late May the sun was welcome, flinging showers of gold over the blue water. Lanny led his half-sister there, saying that he had family matters to talk to her about.

When Lanny first met his half-sister she had been a child, round-faced, gentle, and trusting, full of the wonder of being alive. Because Lanny, seven years older, came from abroad, and could speak French and German fluently and played piano music tumultuously, she had thought him the most wonderful person in the world. Later, when she had fallen in love with Hansi, Lanny had advised and helped her, and for that she owed him a debt she could never repay. But as the years had passed she had been disappointed in him; she thought him a dilettante, a playboy of the arts, making money out of trading in the labours of Marcel Detaze and other men of genius. She was sure he did not really hold Fascist ideas, but she thought he put on that colouration in order to frequent moneyed circles in Europe. If it had been any other man, she would have considered that this placed him beyond the pale.

For herself Bess had developed two life goals: the first, to become a worthy accompanist for Hansi's virtuosity; and the second, to put an end to the exploitation of man by man everywhere over the earth. In the first effort she had done reasonably well, according to the critics; the general tendency was to patronize a wife, but they didn't say that she spoiled the rendition. In the second goal, alas, it was hard to see that she had made much progress to date, and worry over this had caused her face to become thinner and her expression serious, even stern. She dressed simply, even for the concert stage, and did nothing to attract attention to herself. Her flaxen hair she made into two long braids and wound them about her head like a crown. She

received a share of the concert earnings, and the greater part of this she gave to the Party. Lanny had called her a granddaughter of the Puritans; he said it playfully, but he really meant it.

When they were seated beside the summer-house, looking over the Sound dotted with white sails, Bess began with her characteristic impatience. "I know what you want to talk to me about, Lanny. My husband is getting ready for war in his soul, and he expects me not to be unhappy about it."

"A lot of people are getting ready for war, and not only in their souls, Bess."

"I know. The whole country is being made over for war, and I hate it, I hate it! I'll never compromise with it!"

"Listen, dear," he said. "I have some information that you ought to possess. But you'll have to make me a promise and take it seriously. It must be for yourself alone. You will not be at liberty to pass it on."

"I, too, have sources of information, Lanny; and it may be that I already know what you are about to tell me."

"I am quite sure you don't. If it isn't new to you, then of course you are free. But if it is new, then you have to wait until you hear it from other sources than me. I am not at liberty to tell you my reasons, but I cannot take the risk of having my sister become the fountainhead of this news—and especially not while I am here or have just been here."

"You sound very mysterious, Lanny. I will promise, of course."

"Very well. The news is that Hitler is going to attack the Soviet Union in a little more than one month."

She stared at him, and the blood was drained out of her face. She clasped her hands before her so tightly that the knuckles were white. "Oh, Lanny! How horrible!" And then: "How do you know that?"

"Hitler told me, and discussed his plans in detail. So did Hess; and Göring practically admitted it. The plans have been made to the last item, and the armies are now being moved to the front."

"But Lanny! What excuse can they have?"

"Hitler doesn't wait for excuses. He takes what he wants."

"But he has a treaty of non-aggression with the Soviet Union!"

"That means nothing to him. That is just to keep the Russians quiet until he is ready. What Hitler has to have is oil; he cannot win this war without it."

"But, Lanny, the man is mad! The Red Army will be a stone wall!"

"That may be, but he does not think so. He expects his Panzer divisions to break through and surround whole corps, whole armies at a time, and chop them to pieces. We shall have to wait and see."

"The Red Army has its plans also, Lanny. I have been told about them. They will fall back and go on fighting—all the way to the Urals, if necessary."

"Certainly I hope so, but also I am afraid. I just don't know what will happen."

The look on his sister's face was that of one enduring physical agony. "Oh, Lanny, what a dreadful thing! All that wonderful country the Soviets have been working to develop! The three five-year plans! The great dams, the bridges, the mines, the factories! Lanny, I have felt that I owned that country and everything in it! That has been my Socialist Fatherland, the workers' homeland!"

"I know, old dear. You will have to wait, and keep up your courage. What has been built once can be rebuilt more easily."

"Look, Lanny! You put a restriction on me, but this is terrible. The Soviets should be warned!"

"You don't have to have than on your conscience. Oumansky has been told."

"Who told him?"

"That I am not free to say, but it was somebody far more credible than you or I. That I can assure you positively."

"And how did he take it?"

"He refused to believe it. That was some two months ago, and I have no doubt that he has changed his mind now. The matter has progressed to a point where all the insiders know it. Armies of several million men cannot be assembled over a front of a thousand miles without spies being able to find it out. You must understand that the front is no longer the German border; it has been advanced everywhere into foreign territory, and the peasants come and go—you can safely count upon it that no German division is shifted without the Red Army staff knowing when and where."

"I suppose that is true, and of course they will have to fight. But the thought of it makes me physically ill."

"You will have to face it sooner or later, old girl; and I think it had better be sooner, on Hansi's account."

IV

Lanny sat for a while looking out over the peaceful strait of water, which makes a play-place as well as a channel of commerce for the great metropolis. He knew well the tumult of fear and grief that must be in this woman's soul. Rightly or wrongly, she had centred her hopes upon the social experiment being tried in the Soviet Union, and it was her fond dream that this might go on uninterrupted while the

capitalist world tore itself to shreds. To face this new situation meant turning all her thinking upside down.

At last he said gently: "You know, Bess, you have a great man in your keeping. You have to think not merely of *his* happiness but of the happiness he gives to millions of others."

"Yes, I know that." There was a chastened tone to her voice.

"You remember, some two years ago, when I told you there was a possibility of a deal between Stalin and Hitler, you laughed at me, and even became a little angry. Now there will have to be another change in the Party line, pretty nearly a rightabout face. I thought it might help you if you had time to adjust your mind, and especially your emotions."

"Lanny, we have to stand a lot of ridicule for having a Party line and sticking to it. That is easy enough for café celebrities who earn their sumptuous livings writing for the capitalist press, and owe no allegiance except to their latest wisecrack. But the Communists have been at war ever since the Party was founded; and when you are at war you have to have discipline, you have to obey orders even though you may sometimes think they are wrong."

"I know all about that," he said, for his Uncle Jesse had explained it to him when he was a boy. "If that's the way you feel you can work best, it's all right with me. What I'm concerned to do is to save Hansi's happiness, as well as yours. You're going to have to come around to his point of view, you know."

"I suppose so," she said—very slowly, reluctantly. "I can't make it real to myself."

"Face up to it, like a good soldier. You are going to become a war-monger. You are going to think that Roosevelt is the greatest President this country has ever had. You are going to become a pal and bosom friend of good old Winnie."

"Don't tease me, Lanny! This is a ghastly tragedy."

"Yes, old dear; but we might as well get a little fun out of life as we go along, and the spectacle of the Duke of Marlborough's seventh lineal descendant co-operating wholeheartedly with the shoemaker's Red bandit from Tiflis is one which ought to afford you a smile now and then!"

"Is that really going to happen, Lanny?"

"Understand, all this is under the seal of secrecy. The reason that Hess flew to Britain was to try to persuade Caddy Wickthorpe and other appeasers to make a deal with him on the basis that Germany was going to conquer Russia and that Britain would stand by and keep hands off."

"That is what I have been dreading, more than anything in this world."

"I know, bless your heart; but it didn't work out according to the class-struggle formula. It appears that your English forebears have certain moral standards, even older than capitalism, and Adi Schicklgruber has failed to conform to them. The British refuse to trust him an inch further."

"But will they trust Stalin?"

"This much I know: they have Rudi Hess under guard and are pretending to negotiate with him, thus worming out of him all the secrets they can. You can get busy and adjust yourself to the brave new world. My suggestion is that you don't tell Hansi what I have told you. Play a little game with him, for the sake of your love; let him think that he is converting you, little by little, and it will make him the happiest man on the Connecticut shore."

Bess couldn't keep from smiling. "Lanny, you are a rascal—the shrewdest one I know, and the dearest."

"Don't jump all at once, you understand, for that might awaken suspicion. Get into an argument and let him convince you, step by step. Admit that there are such things as moral standards, even in the class struggle. Admit that Hitler may be a little bit worse than Roosevelt. Admit that there is more free speech in America than in Nazi-land. Admit that America has to arm in a world where all Europe is an armed camp. Admit that you hope to see Britain win, and next day you are ready to allow that lend-lease may not be the very worst of crimes. Easy does it, little by little—it's like bringing a big transport down on a landing field!"

V

Lanny had asked his half-sister about Uncle Jesse. She had been to a meeting where he had spoken; he was old and withered, but still full of fire. She had had a few minutes' talk with him, and she gave Lanny his address, which was an obscure hotel in the Gramercy Park section, not far from Union Square where the "Commies," as they were called, had their headquarters. When Lanny returned to the city he called the number, and there was the mocking voice which he had not heard for more than a year. Lanny said: "This is your friend from Bienvenu. Take a walk around the park and I'll pick you up." These two were old hands at dodging the cops and their spies.

The little park, which is smaller than a city block, has an iron fence all around it and is reserved, apparently, for the nursemaids and children of the residences which front it. Lanny didn't think the Nazi agents in New York would be keeping track of all the Communists, so he was satisfied to drive once around the park and make sure that his car wasn't being followed. There was the tall erect figure, defying

age, and the perfectly bald scalp defying the weather. Lanny drew up, and the lively old man hopped in, and away they went.

"Well, Uncle Jesse! I missed you in Paris, and then in London, I believe."

"You should have come to Moscow. There is the city worth seeing—where the world's decisions are going to be made."

This pair had been arguing with each other for almost a quarter of a century. It was much the same controversy as between Hansi and Bess, but here it was carried on with a sense of humour. Lanny, the tender-minded one, believed, or at any rate hoped, that mankind might be influenced by reason, and that social changes might take place without slaughter and waste; Jesse, the tough-minded one, told the fond dreamer that mankind wasn't made that way, and that history was written in blood, not in ink. Bourgeois politics was a farce—and surely he ought to know, having been in the French Chamber for more than a decade.

If you asked why he had stayed, he would answer: it was a platform from which he had been able to tell the people of France about the crooks who were representing them, and about the great interests which were putting up the money. If you asked about the position of France at present, Uncle Jesse would say it was doubtless worse from the material point of view, but better intellectually, for at least the French people weren't being fooled any more—they knew who their enemies were. If you asked what the French could do about it, you would start an exposition of Marxist-Leninist theories. Lanny didn't ask the question, because he had heard it all before, and had told his propagandist uncle that it was like putting a phonograph record on a machine.

What Lanny talked about was the folks at Bienville, and how they were getting along under the Vichy regime; then about Newcastle and the people there. He hadn't mentioned Jesse to Robbie, because Robbie hated and feared his near-brother-in-law like the devil, and had no sense of humour concerning him. It was all right to mention Robbie to Jesse, because Jesse did have a sense of humour, and took Robbie's hatred and fear as a matter of course. "I suppose he is making money by the barrel," the uncle remarked, and the nephew replied: "By the hogshead." He didn't go into details, not wishing to supply material for Jesse's Red speeches in New York.

VI

The Red deputy told about his adventures, getting out of Nazi-occupied France and into Russia. He and his wife had not dared to travel in company, so she had gone to join some relatives who were

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The Red deputy told about his adventures, getting out of Nazi-occupied France and into Russia. He and his wife had not dared to travel in company, so she had gone to join some relatives who were

peasants in Normandy. Presumably she was still there; he had no way of communicating with her, and could only hope that she was not among those who had been "surrendered on demand" to the Nazis. Millions of families had been broken up and scattered like that all over Europe: Poles and Czechs, Belgians and French, and above all Jews and Leftists, who had no idea if they would ever again see their husbands or wives, parents or children. If it is true that misery loves company, Jesse Blackless could have found plenty of it among the refugees right here on Manhattan Island.

He told about his life in the Soviet Union, the land of his dreams, and all the dreams had come true. Everybody was working, and every day's work brought them that much nearer to the goal of Socialism. Everybody was poor by American standards, but that was not because the Soviet system couldn't produce goods; it was because the accursed Nazis made it necessary for everything above a bare subsistence to go into military production. Jesse himself hadn't been idle; he had been taken in as an adviser to the Foreign Office on French affairs, and he had read proofs for the French language edition of *International Literature*. Also, he had done some painting, which the Russians had been generous enough to praise and to exhibit. Their love of art was deeply rooted, and they made the most of every talent, whether manifested by a native child or a Franco-American refugee in his seventies.

In short, here was the same old Uncle Jesse whom Lanny had known for the past twenty-seven years and who hadn't changed a particle, except that he had fewer hairs on his head and many more wrinkles in his lean face and scrawny neck. He was still the incorrigible idealist professing a philosophy of cynical harshness. Human nature was unevolved, and it had to be disciplined and drilled, especially in wartime. The war in which Jesse was interested was not that between capitalist states, which had been going on for centuries and might go on for a thousand years without bringing any progress to humanity. Uncle Jesse's war was the class struggle, which was going to end in the victory of the proletariat of all nations and the establishment of a classless society. Workers of the world, unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains; you have a world to win!

Jesse didn't know whether or not the Nazis were going to attack the Soviet Union. "Such matters are known only to the leaders," he said, "and you don't ask questions, especially if you are a foreigner. But from questions they asked me I gathered that they fear it, and are straining every nerve to prepare themselves."

"I can tell you they had better," responded the P.A. He didn't say: "Hitler told me." He didn't even say: "I know positively." If Constantin Oumansky, the personal friend and confidant of Stalin, had been told, there was no need for Lanny to make himself con-

spicuous wherever he went. He remarked: "I find it generally taken for granted among the people who are on the inside. It's obvious that Hitler has to have oil, and the Ukraine is the nearest place."

Said the Red painter: "You can tell the S.O.B. that he won't get any oil out of the Ukraine—at least not for several years. The Russians won't leave a peasant's hut or a blade of grass for the enemy. The oil fields will be completely demolished, and every hole filled solid with concrete. The Nazis will have to start all over again."

"That is very important, Uncle Jesse, for it will give Britain time to arm, and this country time to help her."

"It happens that I know about it through friends. The Russians are preparing to move whole factories to the Urals, and even to Siberia, and set them up and have them started again in a few weeks. The procedure has been planned to the smallest detail; everything will be put into trains, not merely machinery but office equipment and records. Hitler will find nothing but empty shells—and these will serve as forts until he blows them to pieces with bombing planes or artillery."

VII

There was so much to talk about when you had several families in common, and so many friends. Jesse wanted to know all about Paris, for which he was homesick. He wanted the news of everybody Lanny had met there, and what they had said. What were the newspapers like, and who was writing for them? What was playing at the theatres, and on the screen? Goebbels stuff, of course! And what were the people saying and thinking? Lanny couldn't tell much about that, but he had a fascinating story about Vichy, which Jesse had visited. In fact, the deputy had been all over France, painting pictures, agitating against the bourgeoisie, or just enjoying life on his small income. He had gone to Paris some fifty years ago, when his grandmother had died and left him the income; he had written such exciting letters that his sister Mabel had not rested until she got a chance to join him. When he saw her, at the age of seventeen, he called her "Beauty," and she had liked that name and kept it; also, she had liked Paris, and had never gone back to a preacher's home.

Jesse wanted to know about her now; and about Sophie and Emily and the other ladies of the Côte d'Azur. Could they get money from America, and was there food enough, and mail, and telephones? Was Beauty still suffering from *embonpoint*, and still talking about dieting? And that marriage of hers, to the funniest thing that had ever come down the road! The very word "spirituality" was a red

rag to this Blackless bull, and the idea of his worldly and fashionable sister taking up with such notions moved him to chuckles. It was like going back to the Baptist parsonage in which she had been born and from which she had been so eager to escape. But Lanny said, no, it wasn't at all like that; Parsifal had no creed and no congregation; he just loved you. The Red deputy said: "I'd as soon be dead as be that bored."

But five minutes later he was telling about the little bootblack whom he had picked up in Union Square, and who came three times a week to have his portrait painted. The smartest little *gamin*, with such shiny black eyes as you never saw, even in a Dago face. The first time he had come the face had been newly scrubbed, and Jesse had had to send him away for a week to get it normal again. He told some of the charming remarks this model had made, and Lanny said: "You see, Uncle Jesse, you love your little Dago exactly the way Parsifal Dingle loves everybody at Bienvenu. The only difference is that you 'class angle' your loves. They have to be proletarians with smudged faces."

The Red deputy's answer was: "Oh, fudge!" He was willing to be sentimental, but not to admit it. And least of all would he have anything to do with religion, the opium of the people. If you really wanted to get a rise out of him, just tell him that Communism was the newest crusading faith of mankind! Compare his dogmatism with that of Paul, the apostle to the gentiles, and his speeches in the Chamber with those of James, the brother of Jesus!

Not even the members of Jesse's own family could escape this evangelical zeal. "All joking aside, Lanny, you really ought to visit the Soviet Union. The things you would see there would be a revelation to you. One of the newer collective farms has all the co-operative services. They even have soda fountains and ice-cream parlours!"

"I'm told they're not welcoming tourists just now, Uncle Jesse."

"Naturally, they have to be careful whom they let in. But you don't have to worry, I can fix it for you any time."

"All right," smiled Lanny. "Maybe I'll take you up on it. But first I'll wait and see how your friend Uncle Joe behaves when his friend Adi Schicklgruber jumps on his neck."

VIII

Lanny went off and wrote a report on the items of importance he had picked up in this conference; and then he called the home of his friend Forrest Quadratt. He was told that the Nazi agent was out at the place in New Jersey where he had set up a publishing business.

Lanny phoned there, and drove out on a rainy afternoon. When he arrived he was surprised to have the door opened by Forrest himself; and instead of inviting him in, the suave and soft-voiced agent asked: "Will you take me driving?" Of course Lanny assented, and when they were in the car the other explained: "Some government snoopers have been devoting time to me lately, and I thought it might be better for both if we talked where we couldn't possibly be overheard."

"That is very wise of you, Forrest. I have a lot to tell, and I should hate to have the F.B.I. on my trail."

"They are trying their damndest to get something on me, but I don't think they're getting very far. Believe me, I keep my tracks covered!"

"I hope you don't talk about *me*, Forrest. It might play the devil with my ability to get passports."

"Trust me; I am an old hand. It seems marvellous, how you have been able to visit Europe, and I'll surely never do anything to imperil it."

Right there Lanny decided that he wouldn't tell this Nazi propagandist about having gone into Germany. If Quadratt had heard of it, all right; but otherwise Lanny would talk about Vichy France, where his mother lived, and London, where his daughter lived. He would talk freely—just enough to inspire a German-American propagandist to reciprocate.

At this time the Nazis and their friends were carrying on a desperate campaign to keep America from giving any more aid to Britain. Their broadcasts were beamed day and night, boasting of the havoc their submarines were wreaking and of the gains their armies were making in the Near East; they had Crete and Libya; they were ready to take Syria and Suez; the British no longer dared use the Canal, but were obliged to route their ships all the way around Africa, a fearful tax. "Beware, beware!" intoned Dr. Goebbels; and of course Quadratt had to write like all the others.

But he was a shrewd fellow, and privately he made it plain that he was not fooling himself. Perhaps being distant from the scene enabled him to see things in better perspective. Anyhow, he admitted: "I am worried, Lanny; this war is dragging on far too long. Almost a year has passed since we entered Paris, and we have made no vital gains since then."

"We have taken the Balkans, and that's a huge territory."

"I know, but it isn't territory that counts."

"It's wheat from Hungary and oil from Rumania——"

"Yes, but not enough."

"It's lumber and minerals, a tremendous mass of resources."

"But England continues to hold out, and to keep the blockade that strangled us last time. And meantime, this country is getting

ready for war. We mustn't fool ourselves, Lanny; that is what's happening. We must do something about it ! ”

“ What *can* we do, Forrest ? ”

It turned out that what the ex-poet wanted was for the son of a great aeroplane manufacturer to come out publicly against the militarists. Lanny, and Lanny alone, a sort of Superman, was to reverse the trend of American thinking ! His friend became eloquent on the subject of the wonders he could achieve by coming out on public platforms, in the style of Congressman Fish and Senator Reynolds and Charles A. Lindbergh. Announce a crusade, and make a tour of the country ! “ Incidentally you could make a lot of money, Lanny—much more than by dealing in paintings.”

The other had quite a time explaining that he couldn't possibly do it; he was no speaker and would be scared to death on a platform; he would forget every idea he ever had. This attitude of excessive modesty he persisted in maintaining, in spite of all his friend could say. He was not a public man; what talent he had lay in his ability to meet key persons and put key ideas into their minds. The Führer himself had recognized this, and had definitely commissioned Lanny to say certain specific things. Lanny had met Kurt Meissner in Paris and received fresh requests, and he was at this moment on the point of setting out on a trip to comply with them. The marketing of pictures, while profitable, was really a blind for the advancement of National Socialism.

IX

Forrest Quadratt had no authority to compete with that, so he gave up his scheme. He asked about the Hess matter, a subject on which he was completely in the dark. Evidently the pipeline between New York and Berlin worked only in an easterly and not in a reverse direction. Lanny said he was quite sure that Rudi would never have done anything without the Führer's approval; he believed the flight to Scotland was a last effort to make friends with Britain. There must be some big summer campaign about to start; Lanny didn't know, but he thought it might be through Spain.

Quadratt suggested Russia, very warily, and Lanny guessed that he knew more than he was telling. They discussed the prospects, and the ex-poet revealed once more how greatly he was worried; Russia was so vast and so formless, it would be like hitting into a feather pillow. The real reason, as Lanny made sure, was that Quadratt hated Britain so intensely he was reluctant to see any part of Germany's force expended elsewhere. “ Britain is the enemy, and until we have conquered her we have done nothing.”

Lanny said: "Yes, but you must see that if we conquer Russia this summer, we can turn all our forces westwards—something we dare not do at present." So much pleasure it gave him to be a German, and to dispose of the Wehrmacht's vast resources while motoring through a New Jersey rainstorm!

Quadratt talked freely about his own activities; his book-publishing business, his magazine articles, the speeches he wrote for senators and congressmen, the mothers' crusades he was helping to keep alive. The ladies came to Washington and besieged the offices on Capitol Hill; they screamed and had hysterics in the rotunda—some of them were "nuts," the agent cheerfully admitted, but all were useful. He had done everything he could think of, but he had to admit that he was losing out, alas. The war-mongers were on top, with Roosevelt at their head; and how Quadratt hated him, and what language he used!

Lanny went to see Heinsch, and told how Kurt Meissner had been tremendously interested in the idea of getting That Man out of the way, and had promised to pass on the word to the Führer. Perhaps Heinsch had received some message about it. Heinsch said it was difficult to send messages on that subject; they would have to be brought personally by some trusted friend. He said that his own reports were vague; the men who were working on it had their lips tightly buttoned. Lanny couldn't drop any more hints without risk, so he turned the conversation to the Lord of San Simeon, who had recently started a personal column in his chain of papers. Lanny said: "I count that a feather in my cap, for I suggested the idea to him. But doubtless others have done the same."

"I have been disappointed in the column," declared the other. "The old man rambles, and talks about nothing a good part of the time."

"I can't say I agree with you," was Lanny's response. "I have been reading the column whenever I could get hold of it, and I clipped some of those that I liked, because I knew it would please Mr. Hearst to hear what I thought of them. You are a psychologist, and will get the idea."

This was in the steamship office, and Lanny carried a portfolio—he had brought it along for the sake of its effect on Heinsch. He extracted a folder, and from the folder a bunch of marked clippings. "This is the way to coddle the rich," he said, with a grin which his companion shared. "Imagine that we are in San Simeon. This, Mr. Hearst, is my idea of statesmanship." Lanny read:

"Winston Churchill, premier of England, has repeatedly declared that he will agree to no peace except a peace of victory.

"What victory?

"Whose victory?

"England was unable to achieve victory when it had Poland and Norway and Holland and Belgium and France on its side. . . .

"England has been offered a peace which would respect and insure the integrity of the British Empire. Would that not be the equivalent of a peace of victory? Does he mean that there will be no peace until England has conquered the continent of Europe and the Axis powers have bent the knee and bowed the neck to another Versailles treaty?

"Yes, Mr. Hearst, that is my idea of farsightedness, as well as of vigorous writing. It is absolutely correct and according to fact, as I know because it is what the Führer himself told me to say, and what I have been saying to all his friends in France and Britain and the United States for more than a year. And then this about the Japanese:

"We in America brought about the alliance of Japan with Russia, just as England brought about the alliance of Germany with Russia. We limited more and more our trade with Japan. We made it impossible for Japan to get from us the products and materials that were absolutely necessary for her survival. . . . We have only to treat Japan in fair and friendly fashion to establish firm peace between Japan and the United States. We have only to stop sticking our intrusive nose into her affairs to prevent our nose from being tweaked. We have only to mind our own business and keep out of other people's business to be at peace with all the world.

"That, too, I know to be correct, Mr. Hearst, for it is what the Japanese representatives in Lisbon said to me just a few days after your column appeared; only, of course, they used more polite language—they are a people who will never fail in courtesy. I am sure that in future years you will be proud of those utterances. You might put them at the masthead of your papers, for the world to read for the rest of time. Or perhaps you might have them engraved on your mausoleum, like the Gettysburg Address in the Lincoln Memorial."

Concluding this oration, Lanny remarked: "That may be somewhat exaggerated, but you see what I am driving at."

The Nazi replied: "For God's sake, go out to California and try it on him! It might be worth a million dollars!"

X

So much for politics; and there was business, too. Lanny got a stenographer and wrote letters to his various clients, telling what he had and what he had seen and got prices on. He planned a trip to

several cities, because in this profession you had to exercise the mysterious attribute called charm; you had to make the wealthy art collector realize that he was performing a public service and was being appreciated by a few discriminating souls. Otherwise he might buy jewels for his wife, or his son might get the money and spend it on chorus girls, or his daughter on a gigolo or night-club band leader! Competition is keen in these modern days, and the world is so full of rackets.

Also, being a man and not a machine, Lanny Budd ate and slept, and went with his colleague Zoltan Kertezsi to look at what the new men were doing with the art of painting. The expressionists, surrealists, and abstractionists were doing their worst to confuse the public, but they left this fastidious pair quite cold. Here and there Lanny ran into some of his old friends, those he had met in the days when he was "Mister Irma Barnes." There were beautiful women among them, and these too had learned to exercise the mysterious attribute called charm. It was no longer necessary for them to be invited; they had their own money, and they asked for what they wanted. Thus, inevitably, Lanny had to think a great deal about women—no matter how firmly he might resolve to think about saving the world from Nazi-Fascism.

He thought about Lizbeth. He knew that he had made her unhappy, and he was sorry about it, and would have liked to run down to Baltimore and tell her that he wasn't what she had imagined him to be, and that the *grand monde* in which she aspired to live was far from being the shining elegant place she imagined it. He thought about Peggy Remsen, and firmly resolved not to make the same mistake with her. More frequently still he thought about Laurel, because she was right here, and all he had to do was to dial her telephone number and say: "Come take a walk." It was a moral struggle to keep his hand from reaching out and performing that easy operation.

He had told himself that he owed her one day, and he had given it. But why should he limit himself in that arbitrary fashion? Why was one day a duty, and two days a sin? She had had a good time and had showed it; and certainly he had. Was she now waiting in the hope that he would call her again before he set off for unknown parts of the world? Was her hand moving toward the telephone with the idea of calling him? Never once during their friendship had she done that—except in Berlin, when her life was in danger. She was an old-fashioned lady, and if a man didn't want her she would never want him. The idea that she might be wanting him at this moment set warm currents running all over him.

Then, too, there was the matter of the novel she was planning. He was interested in it, and couldn't help thinking about it. Ideas would occur to him; wouldn't it be an act of kindness to put them at her

disposal? Wouldn't it even be unkind not to do so? He knew Germany so much better than she; he knew every sort of German, Nazi and anti-Nazi and pre-Nazi, from long visits since boyhood. Surely he ought to put that knowledge at her service! At just what point does kindness turn a sin into a duty, or a duty into a sin?

Also, at what point does the exercise of the imagination become a sin? Lanny was going on a tour; and what was to prevent his imagination from taking a lady along? He couldn't introduce her to his exclusive clients; but why couldn't he leave her in a comfortable hotel while he transacted his art business, and then pick her up and speed away to the next city? He knew so many pleasant places in which to sojourn, and so many interesting things to talk about! If Laurel would go along, he might even go as far as California; he couldn't take her to San Simeon—but what lovely times they could have at those "motels" along the way and in the rest camps of the wonderful national parks!

Yes, there were many ways to have a vacation, and even without going so far! Lanny had sailed a boat along the Côte d'Azur, and also in the Newcastle River and the Sound. He imagined a cabin catboat in some place where nobody knew either a presidential agent or a magazine writer; say in Barnegat Bay—what a series of picnics they could have! Or they might go camping in the Adirondacks; the weather would soon be warm enough, and he had vivid recollections of visits to the elaborate "camp" owned by the Harry Murchisons there. On one of those lonely lakes whose shores were covered with pine and fir trees, they would paddle a canoe and catch trout and take them ashore and fry them with slices of bacon; they might rent what was called an open camp—a shelter facing the lake, and with a log fire blazing in front to keep it warm at night. Lanny lacked practice in chopping logs, but guessed he could manage it if he tried—and certainly he had no trouble being an expert lumberjack in his imagination.

This fact was notable, that on all these tours it was Laurel Creston he took with him. The reason was that he knew so much to talk to her about, whereas when he was with Lizbeth the imaginary conversation died quickly. He could be interested in the daughter of the Holdenhursts only so long as he was in the presence of her young fresh beauty, and his blood told him to take her in his arms. He was interested in Peggy Remsen only so long as he was in an art gallery, or in the home of his stepmother, who wanted him to be "nice" to her. But with Laurel there were always fireworks going off, intellectual skyrocketing and verbal Roman candles. His choice of her companionship was a part of that process of natural selection and the survival of the fittest, according to which in the course of some hundreds

of millions of years mind has won out over body, brain over brawn.

XI

All this in the realm of the dream; but when it came to reality, what Lanny took was his customary chaste and solitary tour. He spent several days with his friends the Murchisons, and inspected a new stream-lined plant for the swift production of a hundred different kinds of glass; he had not dreamed there were so many. He visited also a plant where alloy steels were turned out; he had learned from his father how many new kinds had been invented, and how many strange purposes they served. He walked the length, about three-quarters of a mile, where an endless sheet of steel was swept along at a speed of some forty miles an hour, but so smoothly on roller bearings that you hardly realized it was moving at all. Everywhere in this vast Allegheny inferno the mills were pouring out products, working in three shifts. Of the depression which had caused such panic among the New Dealers barely three years ago, there was no longer a trace.

And it was the same all over America; the god of war had waved his magic wand over the land. In Cincinnati Lanny's friends the Timmonses proudly showed him a huge hardware plant which was still making hammers and saws, but had been extended overnight to include metal parts for warships and planes and artillery. In Louisville his friends the Petries of "Petries' Peerless" were now distilling alcohol by the tens of thousands of gallons for war purposes. A marvellous sensation to any sort of producer to be turned loose to make all he could; it was a new sort of game, and he played at it as he had played football at college. The money was a matter of no consequence, he would say—though Lanny didn't meet anybody who was refusing it.

So it was in Detroit, and in Chicago, and even in Reubens, Indiana, where old Ezra Hackabury's sons were enlarging a soap plant, for it appeared that the British people had to keep clean, even under the bombs; the Tommies had to shave every morning, even amid the sandstorms of North Africa. Also there were new buildings going up far out in the farmlands, and this was supposed to be the most closely guarded of secrets; but old Ezra said it appeared that if you could make kitchen soap you could also make kinds that went off with a loud bang—preferably not in your kitchen.

You might have thought that all this material activity made a poor time to sell works of art; but Lanny found it otherwise. All these people were feeling good; they were sitting on the top of the world, and without any of the discomfort and danger. Old masters? Sure

thing ! If they are really good, they belong over here. Lanny had only to mention the fact that a Corot, superior to any in the Taft collection, or great examples by Constable and Bonington were now available in England. If you knew several millionaires, you played one against another. Alonzo Timmons, one of good old Sophie's many nephews, had built a wing of his country home just to hang paintings in, and he took his aunt's word that Lanny Budd was the fellow to fill the blank spaces. Lanny told him about Ezra Hackabury, thus playing the state of Indiana against the state of Ohio.

The old soapman, to whom Lanny was still the gay and eager little boy who had sailed on the *Bluebird*, had decided that he wanted all the paintings that Marcel had made on board the yacht and all that he had painted later as a result of the trip. That was a way to bring back old times, and to leave something for people to remember you by. Much better than a lot of jealous and quarrelling in-laws ! The soapman wanted to spend the money quickly, before the in-laws got wind of it.

Lanny had brought a complete set of photographs, with the prices on the backs ; Ezra marked those he wanted, and it figured up to something like two hundred thousand dollars. Without batting an eyelid he wrote a cheque for the amount, dating it three days ahead so he could have time to market some securities and have the money in the bank. Lanny was to employ Zoltan Kertezsi to travel to Baltimore and get the right paintings out of the vault and have them shipped ; meantime Ezra would start the building of a proper fireproof gallery in the centre of the town. " Imagine putting Reubens, Indiana, on the map ! " chuckled the old codger. Lanny thought he got more fun out of disappointing his sons' wives than he did out of looking at Marcel's paintings of Greek and North African ruins.

XII

So passed very pleasantly the early weeks of June. Morning and afternoon Lanny read the newspapers of the town in which he found himself ; they were pretty much alike, for their foreign news came from central agencies, and the only difference was in what the local editors chose to headline. Also there was the radio, the same in its main features all over the country. Day and night he turned the dials, and held his breath as the news period began.

On the evening of Saturday the 21st of June, he attended a dinner-dance at the mansion of old Mrs. Fotheringay on the North Shore Drive of Chicago. The affair was in honour of a visiting niece ; dinner was at eighty-thirty and dancing began two hours later. At one in

the morning Lanny strolled into one of the rooms where a large group of the older people were gathered about a radio "console." They were getting the news which Lanny had been expecting for the past three months. The German Armies were invading Russia, all the way from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

Interesting indeed to see and hear the reaction of this fashionable company ! Here was the stronghold of isolationism, within the very shadow of the *Tribune* tower, where for more than two decades there had been a veritable arsenal of machine-guns, awaiting an expected attack by the Reds. Now these gloating ladies and gentlemen seemed to have but one thought—that the news would destroy at one blow the wicked cause of their enemies, the "interventionists." Now everybody would believe in Hitler, and help him ! Now even Britain would have to make peace with him ! Now it was unthinkable that any American would wish to send arms to the Führer's enemies !

Later that same morning Lanny was motoring eastward, and over the radio in his car he listened to the rolling periods from "good old Winnie". A speech in which he pledged full and complete solidarity with Stalin. Lanny would have given a lot to see the faces of the Chicago ladies and gentlemen. He would have liked to be with Hansi and Bess, with Rick, with Raoul, with Bernhardt Monck ; but not with the Führer, not with fat Hermann, not with the grim Rudi, wherever the British were putting him up !

To himself Lanny said : " The Nazis have committed suicide ! "

XIII

On these tours the P.A. made it a practice to keep in touch with Newcastle. His mail came to Robbie's office, and Robbie would forward it by air. It was while Lanny was in Cleveland, finishing up a deal, that the father phoned him and said : " There was a call for you from Washington. The man said ' government business,' but wouldn't give his name. I promised to tell you to be in your hotel at two this afternoon." Robbie asked no questions, having long ago learned to keep his own secrets and let others keep theirs.

At the hour appointed Lanny was in his hotel room, and there came a voice which he had not heard for quite a while. " This is your old employer from Paris. No names, please."

" Well, I'll be switched ! " said Lanny. " How is the world treating you ? "

" Keeping me much too busy. It is a cause of stomach ulcers. I want to see you about a matter of number-one importance. How soon could you meet me in New York ? "

"I could fly, if necessary. I have a car belonging to my father, but he could send a man for it."

"How soon if you drive?"

Lanny figured quickly. "I could do it in a little less than twelve hours, starting in five or ten minutes."

"Drive until midnight, then get your sleep, and finish in the morning. You remember the hotel in New York where I met you and your father?"

"I do."

"I'll expect you there to-morrow forenoon. When you are an hour or two from New York, phone and leave word for me."

"O.K.," said Lanny.

"And take care of yourself on the way. I have something that will interest you very much, I am guessing."

"O.K.," repeated Lanny, and hung up.

He phoned the hotel desk to have his car at the door; he phoned a client to say that he had to leave unexpectedly; he put his belongings into his bags, paid his hotel bill, stepped into the car, and sped away eastward on Euclid Avenue, which had once been the fashionable boulevard of the city, and now, like Fifth Avenue in New York, had been encroached upon by business. He drove as fast as the law allowed; and while he drove he thought about what lay ahead of him.

A call from Charlie Alston, the one-time "barb" in Robbie Budd's class at Yale, was the same thing as a call from F.D.R.—even more so, because F.D. liked to gossip and tell stories, whereas Professor Alston, as Lanny called him, never summoned anybody unless it was in very truth a "number-one matter." Lanny's "old employer in Paris" had been at that time a humble geographer on President Wilson's large staff at the Peace Conference; but in the past twenty-two years he had become, first a close friend and adviser to the Governor of New York State, then a member of the "brain trust" which that Governor brought with him to Washington.

In short, he was one of those New Deal college professors whom Robbie Budd had so abhorred and feared, until a couple of years ago, when Charlie had summoned him to New York and "put him on the dole," as Robbie phrased it. All the way on that drive, the son of Budd-Erling was wondering. Was he, too, going to be ordered to take a job? And would he be paid out of the Fish Hatcheries Fund, or the Tennessee Valley Authority, or would it be by the Librarian of Congress?

18

A Furnace for Your Foe

NO more than two years had passed since Lanny had last seen Professor Alston, but they had been hard and wearing years for this political man. It is no job to be taken lightly—one in which you have a hundred million masters, and a large percentage of them hating you actively, watching day and night to find something wrong that you are doing. The hair of this slender little man had grown greyer and thinner, and there were many more lines in his face. Yet the eyes behind the gold spectacles still had their twinkle of fun, and the kindness in the voice never failed, except when he was talking about the Nazis and their American abettors.

Of Lanny Budd he had only the most agreeable memories. The grandson of Budd Gunmakers had been the perfect model of a secretary-translator at a world Peace Conference. He had been completely wrapped up in his job, and had never once had to be rebuked for neglect of duties. He had been entrusted with many secrets of state, and though he had met reporters frequently, no one ever wormed anything out of him, unless it was something that Alston wanted wormed out at that precise hour. In fact, this socially trained secretary had become so expert that he had known when his employer wanted a "leak" to occur, and could spare the employer the embarrassment of having to say so. The only blunder Lanny had committed was one of which the geographer had never got a hint—his helping Kurt Meissner in Paris to escape from the French police. In view of what Kurt had since become and what he was now doing, Lanny knew that this had been a serious blunder; however, Alston would have excused it, because he, too, believed in friendship, and had known what it was to trust a friend too long.

Here they were, after exactly twenty-two years, and they were still master and loyal servant; or so Lanny felt in his heart, and so he guessed it was going to be in action. The New Deal "fixer," as was his custom, wasted little time on preliminaries. He said: "You got some sleep?" and then: "You feel fit?" Lanny, smiling, replied: "Go to it!" and the other said:

"What I am about to entrust to you is beyond any question the most important secret in the modern world. The fate of the war and

of the whole future may depend upon it. You know that I don't use words lightly; I will add that the President agrees with me and that the words are his as well as mine. I was with him yesterday morning, and suggested you as the man to receive the offer. If you accept, you will still be working for F.D. It is a proposition for you to go into Germany again and bring out certain information. You will need considerable training before you go, in order to understand the information and to be able to remember it, since not a word of it may be put on paper. The man in Germany from whom you will get the information is one whom we have every reason to trust, and I do not think you will run any greater risk than you have been running in the past; but there is always the chance of a slip, and nobody can guarantee safety in such work. That you will understand without my telling you."

"Of course, Professor Alston." Lanny gave a sort of gulp inside him, remembering things that had happened to him in Germany, to say nothing of France and Spain; things that this quiet little "fixer" had no idea of. Lanny hadn't enjoyed them then, and didn't enjoy remembering them ever.

"Let me make it plain—you don't have to accept this commission. I don't put the slightest pressure upon you. The Governor agrees with me that what you have done for him is plenty; and if you have other things that you want to do, you have only to say so. All I tell you is that you may have a chance to do more than any other one man to help in knocking out the Nazi-Fascists. I don't say it will work out—nobody on earth can say that—but I say there is a first-class chance."

"That is enough, Professor Alston." Lanny said it quickly. Perhaps he was afraid that if he hesitated at all he might hesitate too long.

"Think it over and be sure," said the tempter.

"If it was anybody but you and the Governor, I might want time, because it would seem too much to be true. But I know you well enough, and don't have to delay. I am ready for the job. I'll do my best."

II

Before Alston had a chance to continue, Lanny got up and opened the door of the suite and looked outside into the passage. Then he looked about the room. There were doors which might lead into closets or into an adjoining suite. Lanny said: "Have you searched this place thoroughly?" When his friend replied in the affirmative, Lanny asked: "Do you mind if I turn on the tap in the bathtub?" He turned the cold water at full force, without the stopper in the tub.

"That is a trick my father taught me," he said. "It makes things a little less easy for a keyhole listener."

Alston drew his chair close to Lanny's and began, in a low voice: "A half-dozen trusted men share this secret, and others know only parts. You will know only such parts as are necessary to your own job. Every person who is entrusted with even the smallest detail has had to give his word of honour never to speak of it to anybody else, except to others who know, and then nothing except what is necessary to the work they are doing in common. It is absolutely the most hush-hush matter in the whole world."

"I understand, Professor. You have my word of honour."

"Not to your father, not to your mother, not to your dearest friend, not to the woman you love. Tell me, Lanny, have you married again?"

"No."

"Are you in love?"

Lanny couldn't keep from smiling. "I'm in the uncomfortable position of not being sure which of two women I should like to love, and I can't love either, because I couldn't explain my job to them."

"Well, leave it that way for the present. Have you anything of your own that has to be done?"

"A couple of picture deals to be closed, but that can be attended to by mail."

"Keep your picture business going, because it is an essential camouflage. The point is, are you free to go and stay for a while in a place I name, and then to go into Germany as you did before?"

"The first part is O.K., but getting into Germany may not be so easy. It was Rudolf Hess who invited me last time. I don't suppose anybody is blaming me for what has happened to him—I certainly made it plain to him that I was afraid of his scheme. But still, I can't be sure how matters will stand. If the Wehrmacht goes on advancing into Russia as it is now, the Number One will be feeling fine; but nobody can guarantee how it will be in a month or two. My best bet is Göring, who always likes to talk about paintings, no matter what is happening to his Luftwaffe. He has promised to put me at the head of his art museum which is quite literally to end all other museums in Europe."

"And now tell me this: do you know anything about modern physics?"

"I have read a little of Jeans and Eddington—just enough to know that the subject is a thousand miles above my head."

"That's just about my measurement, too," said the ex-geographer; "but still I have to help with this project. In the present emergency we have to crowd whole graduate and post-graduate courses into a few

weeks. So you will have to boost yourself up that thousand miles. When some very learned physicist gives you a formula, it must make sense to you, and you must be able to learn it and repeat it a week or two later. This secret of all secrets——"

Lanny broke in. "Listen, Professor—I don't feel happy talking in a hotel room. It is something I have never done if I could help it. There are such tricky listening devices nowadays, and you are a person whom everybody knows. I have a car, and I take the trouble to make certain that nobody has installed any recording device in the trunk. Motoring is the one way to talk with real security. We can drive as long as we please in Central Park; or we can go out into the country, have lunch in some small place where nobody knows us, and come back whenever you say."

The mousy little man stood up. "All right. Let's go!"

"I'll go first," said Lanny. "Give me five minutes to get the car. Then you walk north on the east side of Park Avenue and I'll slide by and pick you up."

III

"Out of the city," said Alston; so they proceeded north, and across one of the bridges into Westchester County. The sound of a purring motor is much better than water in a bathtub for the covering of a human voice, so now they could talk freely about the secret of all secrets. "Do you know any higher mathematics?" inquired the ex-geographer, and Lanny replied: "It seemed frightfully high to me at St. Thomas's Academy, but it was only algebra and trigonometry. To-day I'm sure I couldn't solve the most elementary problem."

"This time you will begin at the top. You are going to Princeton and cram the mathematical formulas and experimental techniques of nuclear physics. You will have a competent teacher, and your work will be under the personal direction of Professor Einstein."

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed the P.A.

"It sounds rather mad, but this is the situation we face: there are many physicists who know the subject, but they are known to be physicists and they don't happen to have access to Nazi Germany at war. We can't advertise for such a man, we can't even talk about the problem except among a very few persons. The only solution we could think of was to pick out a man who does have access to Germany and then make a physicist out of him."

"But, Professor, an utter ignoramus, an illiterate in the subject—and a man who has never applied himself to study!"

"You are surely wrong about that, Lanny. I saw you apply

yourself to the world situation in 1919, and work at it faithfully for six months. Also, I am sure you didn't learn to play the piano as you do without applying yourself."

"Yes, but those were things that I loved!"

"All right; you will learn to love the nucleus of the atom, because you will know that it may afford you the means of blowing Nazi-Fascism off the face of the earth."

"Of course, if you put it that way, I'll work like a man possessed; but I can't promise that I'll be anything but a dud."

"This is the situation, Lanny. We have in Germany one absolutely priceless man: a physicist, one of the greatest in the world, who is believed to be a loyal Nazi and is trusted as such, but who is really an anti-Nazi. This man is working in the very heart of the most important war project now known to science. It is a race between the Germans and Italians on the one side, and the British and ourselves on the other. Whichever side wins this race has won the war. I am not speaking loosely, but precisely; whoever solves first the laboratory and then the production problem will wipe the other off the map of the world. This man I speak of is willing to tell us everything the Germans have learned and are doing on the project, the only difficulty is how to contact him. If he puts it on paper the formulas are instantly recognizable and point directly to him, with only two or three colleagues as alternative possibilities. If he entrusts it to a messenger in Germany, there is the problem of how that messenger is to get out, and the possibility that he might prove to be a Nazi agent. You must get it clear that the Nazis realize the importance of this secret exactly as we do and are taking every precaution they can think of."

"Have you any idea how I am to meet this man—assuming that I get there?"

"That problem is one which will tax all the ingenuity you possess. But first you have to prepare yourself, so as to be able to understand what is being told to you. It is conceivable that man with a remarkable verbal memory might learn mathematical formulas and repeat them *ad litteram*, but the slightest error might be ruinous to the whole thing, and anyhow, there are questions you will have to ask, and you must understand the answers so as to know what additional questions may be necessary. There seems no way out of it but for you to cram like the devil."

"You've got me badly scared, Professor. All I can say is, I'll do my best. I have read somewhere that Einstein said there were only half a dozen men in the world who understood his relativity theory."

"That was some time ago, and a lot of men have been studying it since. But you don't have anything to do with that; what you have to understand are certain definite problems and their suggested

solutions. You will be told exactly what you need to learn, and there will be somebody to answer your questions."

"Well, that sounds a little better," sighed this suddenly grown-up playboy.

IV

Alston talked for a while about the practical aspects of his proposal. "You will go to Princeton, prepared to live for a month or two. Professor Einstein will talk with you and assign somebody to take charge of your studies. Your mode of living will be arranged. It will be better for you not to take any part in social life—you won't have time, and you don't want to attract attention. I suggest that you do not speak about your past life at all. You know French and German, which will be useful; but don't mention how you came to know them, or the fact that you have been in Germany, or know any of the Nazis."

"All that is reasonable enough, and I'll conform to it gladly. But I am troubled about the idea of a place like Princeton, which is so well identified with Einstein, and probably with this project. Have you considered the possibility that the Nazis may be watching the laboratory, or wherever it is that he works?"

"His work is entirely theoretical, and his office is in the Institute for Advanced Study. You are not to be seen there. I have an appointment late this afternoon with a gentleman of Princeton who has an elaborate estate, and I am going to ask him to take care of you. He is an art patron, and you may possibly have heard of him—Mr. Alonzo Curtice."

"I know him by reputation."

"My idea is for you to go there, ostensibly to assist in preparing a catalogue of his collection. No doubt he has some cottage or retired place which he can assign to you. His servants will attend to commissions for you, and it will be better if you do not go off the estate. As to your mail—how do you get it at present?"

"It comes in my father's care."

"Then you might ask your father to put it in a second envelope and address it to Mr. Curtice. I suppose it will be all right to tell your father that you are doing a cataloguing job?"

"Certainly, if the gentleman is willing to be put to all this trouble."

"In times like these, Lanny, we put things up to people in such a way that they cannot refuse; at least, so far we have never encountered a refusal. You must understand that I am no longer the crackpot college professor, the boondoggler squandering public funds and undermining the American business system. I am a man who is helping to save the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force—and I deal with persons who consider that a worth-while enterprise."

V

They stopped at a roadside place and had a light lunch, and then turned back toward the city. Having settled the practical details and made certain that they were acceptable, Alston talked for a while about the man who was to take charge of Lanny's mind.

"Albert Einstein represents one of Hitler's worst blunders—perhaps it may turn out to be a greater blunder even than the invasion of Russia. Einstein was deeply absorbed in his duties as director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Physical Institute; but, since he is a Jew, Hitler deprived him of his post and thus gave him to America. It appears to be a stroke of divine justice that this would-be pacifist is the man who, in the course of keeping watch over the progress of physical science, made note of the fact that two professors in a certain laboratory were on the verge of an achievement of enormous importance in military affairs. He wrote a letter to the President, pointing out that these men ought to have the immediate and full support of the government in their work. He sent this letter to F.D. by a friend; and it is part of the kindness of fate, or perhaps of Providence, that we have at the head of our government a man who understands the importance of scientific knowledge, and who saw to it that the advice of Einstein was immediately heeded."

"Oh, lovely!" exclaimed Lanny. "If we had had the making of world events we could not have devised anything more pleasing to the moral sense."

"It has now come about that a dozen of our greatest laboratories are working day and night on this project, and there is a supervising group, known as the Advisory Committee on Uranium. Does that suggest anything to you?"

"I've been trying to guess what I am getting in for, and it occurred to me that it must be what is known as splitting the atom."

"That is the point. Do you know much about it?"

"Only what I have read in the papers."

"You have noticed, perhaps, that you haven't read anything for some time. The subject has dived underground. But those who are in on the secret know that both sides in this war are straining every resource they possess. Among ourselves we speak of it as 'the battle of the atom.'"

"Tell me what you can about it, so that I may not be an utter ignoramus when I meet this learned man."

"When we are dealing with a man like Einstein, the difference between what you know and what I know is hardly noticeable. However, I have had to learn the A-B-C's and I can tell you that much.

You are familiar with Einstein's discovery that mass and energy are the same ? ”

“ I have read the statement.”

“ He worked it out mathematically, as a matter of pure theory, and it was left for the physicists to substantiate it, which they have done. All forms of matter, which appear so solid to us, are manifestations of electrical force. Einstein's formula reads $E = mc^2$, which tells us that the energy locked up in matter is equal to its mass multiplied by the square of the speed of light. The speed of light being 186,000 miles per second, you multiply that figure by itself and have something close to thirty-five billions. Thus it appears that we have in the atom a degree of energy almost beyond comprehension; wholly outside and beyond the scale with which we usually deal, of coal and oil and water power.”

Lanny said: “ I am familiar with the idea, but vaguely.”

“ We are approaching a time when it will no longer be vague. I stopped trying to learn the figures because they increase every time I talk with one of the uranium men. It appears that the heavy atoms are the easiest to split and the heaviest of all is this rare metal, uranium, which we get from pitch-blende ore. The energy of the atom is contained in the centre, which is called the nucleus, and when the nucleus is split, a part of the energy is released; but until lately the amount of energy expended to split the nucleus is greater than the energy obtained. What I have called the great secret is the fact that laboratory workers have found a way to release two hundred million electron volts of energy by the expenditure of one electron volt.”

“ That certainly sounds like a good business deal,” commented the listener.

“ It is less simple than it sounds, because laboratory conditions cannot always be reproduced outside, and as the scale of the work increases so do the difficulties and dangers. These are the problems upon which our best scientific brains are working, and they will be explained to you in detail by someone who really understands them. Give him your best attention, and while you listen bear in mind that upon your understanding may depend the question whether we shall wipe out Berlin or whether Berlin shall wipe out New York.”

“ God help us ! ” said Lanny Budd. “ And especially me ! ”

VI

They came back to the great city, which Lanny saw with new eyes; a scene of ruin and desolation such as he had observed in London, only thousands of times greater. He delivered Alston to the neigh-

bourhood of Alston's hotel, and was told: "If Mr. Curtice comes on time, I'll be ready to phone you at your hotel in about an hour."

Lanny replied: "Meantime I'll visit a bookstore and see what I can find on the atom."

This he did, and when his telephone rang he had already learned the difference between electrons and protons and deuterons and neutrons, and was beginning to tear his hair over some of the formulas. Alston said: "The matter has been arranged, and our friend is telephoning to his home to have everything made ready for you. How soon can you leave?"

Lanny replied: "In fifteen minutes."

Two hours later he drove his car past the gates of one of those dignified estates which tell you that the owner and his father and his grandfather before him had money. It was an old-fashioned two-story house, painted white, with tall columns going up to the height of the roof; wings had been added, and one of these, as Lanny discovered, was the art gallery. There were old shade trees, and lawns which made him think of England; peacocks, some of them snow-white, and lavender-grey lyre birds strutted on them, and there was an enclosure with deer ready to nibble bread or lumps of sugar out of your hand. In short, it was an entirely suitable place for an art expert making a catalogue.

A polite steward received the visitor and showed him to a little cottage which would be his home. It was remote enough so that he wouldn't be in anybody's way; apparently someone had been moved out at two hours' notice, for not all the bureau drawers were yet emptied. Remembering his camouflage, he asked how soon he could view the paintings; he was taken there at once, and spent a pleasant hour studying the best collection of English portraits he had ever seen. One could not have lived in the same house with these august and stately ladies and gentlemen and not have proper manners. When his hostess came to join him, Lanny was not surprised that she looked and acted as if she had stepped out of a large gold frame. In the two months that Lanny spent in this grey-haired lady's home he never saw her looking otherwise, and she never asked him a single question about himself, his past life, his family, his friends, or what he was really doing over there in the cottage.

The master of the estate returned from New York the next day. He was somewhat shorter than his wife, dapper and cheerful. He was an investment banker, now semi-retired, as he phrased it. He wore a white moustache, and his manners reminded Lanny of Otto Kahn in the spirit world. But Mr. Curtice was pure "Aryan," from a long way back. He must have recognized Lanny as a fellow-member of the ruling caste. What he thought about the invasion of his ultra-fashion-

able university by Jewish refugees from abroad was a subject that he never referred to. The institution, like most in the country, had gone in heavily for war work, and about this the visitor heard much.

Princeton is an old town, English in its culture and sympathies. Lanny might have met agreeable company here, but that wasn't in the cards; his breakfast and lunch were brought to him at the cottage and he dined with the family only when there were no other guests. Art books and catalogues from the library were brought to him and he spread them ostentatiously on his work-table; but they were not what he worked at. There was a radio set in the living-room, and a New York paper was brought with his breakfast each day. The coloured servant who brought it asked for a list of his wants, and whatever they were, the articles appeared with the lunch.

In a period of two months Lanny went off the estate only once; he got his exercise walking on the extensive grounds, generally after dark, and most of that time he was repeating atomic formulas in his mind. It was the life of a monk—which is what many of the worshippers of scientific truth are. They are permitted to marry, but often their wives are worshippers also, and work side by side with them in the laboratories, sharing the thrills of the discovery of truth, perhaps the greatest which can come to man or woman. There are no more continents or islands left for a Columbus or a Captain Cook, but there are universes of the infinitely vast and others of the infinitely small; also, as Lanny Budd knew well, there are universes inside the mind of man, waiting for generations of explorers.

VII

Next morning came one of the great adventures of a P.A.'s life—or so it seemed to him. Soon after he had finished breakfast there came a light tap on the cottage door and when he opened it there was an old gentleman. He was shortish and slightly plump, and had a round cherub's face which all the world knew and either loved or hated. He had a grey moustache and a generous thatch of grey hair, and apparently the latter was difficult to subdue so he just let it alone. He wore no hat, and his clothing consisted of a white shirt open at the throat and a pair of trousers which bore no signs of a pressing iron. He was one of the sights of this decidedly prim town and he must have known it; he watched it through a pair of twinkling brown eyes, and greeted it with the happiest and most charming smile that anybody on earth could imagine.

"Mr. Budd?" he inquired, and then: "Good morning. I am Professor Einstein."

"Oh, come in, Professor!" exclaimed Lanny. He was overwhelmed by the honour, and said so, whereupon the great man replied: "I am the one to say that, for they tell me you have the courage to go back into Nazi Germany, which is something I could never do. Both our services are needed, so we shall be friends."

"Thank you, with all my heart, Professor."

"*Ja wohl*—to work! I am going to try, in the fewest words, to give you an outline of the problem we are seeking to solve. It is too bad that we have to use these giant forces to destroy life instead of to build it up; but that has often been the way in the history of science, and it is tragically so now. We confront a situation where Germany will get the atomic bomb if we do not. That is our only possible justification. I take it we agree that the National-Socialist terror has to be put down, and that everything else has to wait upon that."

"Certainly, Professor."

"I want to begin at the beginning, and I do not want to speak one word you do not understand. Will you promise to interrupt me the moment I say anything that is not perfectly clear to you?"

"Yes, Professor."

"When I was a youth, my teachers were all certain that the atom was a tiny lump of solid material, and that nobody could possibly divide it—I was rebuked for suggesting such an idea. To-day we know that the atom, so small that its nucleus is estimated at two and one-half trillionths of an inch, is a miniature solar system, reproducing the phenomena and obeying the laws which govern all the universe. We have, of course, never seen an atom, or any of its parts; we have only seen their effects. We do not know whether they are really particles, or waves, or what; we can only call them manifestations of energy, apparently electrical. Around the nucleus revolves a cloud of electrons, and between electrons and nucleus appears to be empty space, just as in our solar system. The number of the electrons determines what we call the atomic number, and this varies from hydrogen, the lightest of all substances, which has one electron, to uranium, the heaviest, which has ninety-two. You will not need to learn the table, because you will be dealing for the most part only with uranium. That will be a relief to you, I am sure."

"Yes, indeed, Professor," said Lanny, as humble as any school-boy. At the same time he smiled, for it was not easy to resist the elderly cherub's warm kindness.

VIII

This patient great man went on to explain the elementary principles of his science. Lanny thought, it was as if Shakespeare were teaching the alphabet to a child. But the pupil didn't have time to worry

about it, being too busy trying to make sure that he understood every one of the twenty-six letters. He learned how it had been found possible to detach portions of the atomic nucleus by bombarding it with particles; great machines called cyclotrons had been built for this purpose, and a long series of experiments had been conducted. A particle of the nucleus, called the neutron, had been discovered which, having no electrical charge, could slip through the defences of the nucleus. With these it had been found possible to bombard the uranium atom and tear it apart.

"So," said Einstein, "in the last couple of years we have been able to think of making some practical use of this most tremendous of all forces. We are dealing with an extremely complex situation. There are species of atoms having the same atomic numbers, but different mass numbers, and these we call isotopes; the uranium isotopes are still uranium, but different in mass. One is U-238, so named because its nucleus contains 92 protons and 146 neutrons. Another has lost 3 neutrons, and so we call it U-235. This is highly unstable, that is, easy to set off; on the other hand, U-238 refuses to go off, and it puts out the fire, so to speak. Thus we are in the position of a man driving an automobile; we have the fuel which makes the car go and we have the brakes which stop it; the problem is to learn how to use each in the right quantities and at the right time. But instead of having a tankful of petrol which may burn up the car, we here have forces so terrible that a handful might blow up a city. When a nucleus of U-235 breaks up, it throws off one or more neutrons, and these, when slowed down, break up new U-235 nuclei, and so on. This is what we call a 'chain reaction' and you can see how dangerous it might become; we might be in the position of the sorcerer's apprentice in Goethe's poem, who commanded the imps to fill the bathtub and then couldn't remember the formula to make them stop."

Lanny ventured: "Might it not be that we could set all the atoms in the world to going at once?"

"Theoretically, yes; but it is enough to make sure that we do not explode the laboratory and the investigators."

"So far I think I understand, sir. But Professor Alston mentioned a new element, plutonium."

"We have succeeded in making various artificial elements. This one we named neptunium; then, very soon, we discovered that it changed into another element, which we called plutonium. This is 'fissionable,' as we say, meaning that it can be exploded. Not being an isotope of uranium, it can be separated from uranium by chemical means. We are now seeking what we call a 'moderator,' some substance with which we can surround plutonium, and which will slow down the neutrons to speeds at which they are more likely to cause

fission. We have reason to think that the Germans are using heavy water for this purpose. Do you know what heavy water is ? ”

“ I believe I have read that it is water whose molecule contains a heavier hydrogen isotope than normal water.”

“ It is called deuterium oxide. One of the things our British friends would like very much to know is where the Germans are making this heavy water, so that they could bomb the plant; also, of course, the place where their atomic work is being done. It is desired to know the techniques they are employing, and what progress they have made; whether they are still in the laboratory stage, as we are, or whether they have reached the production stage. Every smallest indication is of importance, because it will help to give us our time scale: how many weeks or months or years we may expect before an atomic bomb is carried to New York by a rocket, or by a plane launched from a submarine near by.”

“ I understand that part, Professor,” said the humble neophyte, “ and I can only assure you that I will study as hard as I can and do my best.”

“ Let us make a little test of your aptitude. I should like you now to recite to me the lecture you have just heard.”

“ Oh, Professor ! ” exclaimed Lanny, quailing; then, with the tact he had learned among the diplomats: “ It will hardly be a test, because Professor Alston has already given me an outline, and I have been dipping into books last night and this morning.”

“ Never mind that,” said the teacher, whose appearance of simplicity possibly was deceptive. “ Just repeat to me everything you can remember of the words I have spoken to you.”

Lanny began, and the patient great man listened attentively. Lanny did well, because he had really put his mind on it. He overlooked a few details, but when the teacher asked about these he was able to answer. To his relief Einstein said: “ You have a passing mark. If you study conscientiously you should be able to understand the questions our scientists wish to have answered, and to remember the answers correctly.”

“ I promise to do my very utmost, Professor.”

“ I have asked one of my assistants, Dr. Braunschweig, to come to you this morning, and he is about due. He is in touch with this uranium work, and will give you confidential material to study; he will answer your questions and keep track of your progress day by day. Hereafter it will be better if he comes in the evening, so as to attract less attention.”

“ Thank you, Professor.”

“ And now, you tell me something, Herr Budd.”

“ If I can, sir.”

"What do you think are the chances of the Russians being able to hold out?"

Dr. Braunschweig was another of Adolf Hitler's gifts to the United States of America. He was slender, pale, dark-haired, and wore pince-nez. He was about thirty, and Lanny, discovering what was inside his head, was awe-stricken. Oddly enough, he came to realize that the young scientist was in awe of him, presumably because Lanny was Anglo-Saxon, and elegant, and proper in every way. The younger man had evidently suffered greatly, but he did not talk about it; he took a strictly professional attitude, and did his job with thoroughness. He went through the atomic story again, with much more detail; he opened up a large brief-case and produced books, pamphlets, technical publications, mimeographed documents. The formulas were appalling, but Lanny said: "I will learn them. I will work the way you have worked." He remembered, but did not repeat, the story of the Boston aristocrat who said to his indolent son: "If you don't brace up and do something I'll send you to Harvard to compete with the Jews." Lanny knew that was the real reason why the Nazis hated the Jews—they were so hard to compete with.

The P.A. buckled down to work. He ate his meals and then for half an hour or so he listened to the radio or read the newspapers; then he studied until he was dizzy. He would go out for a stroll, and feed the deer, or watch the peacocks and lyre birds and think how much they resembled in their manners the ladies and gentlemen he had known in the *grand monde*—the generals with their gold braid and precedence, the statesmen and plutocrats with their orders and sashes. Thus meditating, he would return to his task of undermining this world—for that was what the war was, now that the Reds were on the right side and it was another war for democracy.

At first it was very hard, for there was a new and highly technical vocabulary, and Lanny had forgotten what the symbols meant, if he had ever known. But every evening the faithful young doctor answered questions and explained what the neophyte had marked; and of course each thing the neophyte was able to understand made it easier to understand the next. "Don't worry," the tutor said, "you are making progress. As a rule it takes years to master this subject." He would comfort the distracted pupil by setting aside whole sections in the books and publications. "You won't need that; it's theoretical, and we are concerned with practice."

To an active mind it is fascinating to solve any problem, even a purely artificial one, say a cross-word puzzle, or one in chess. Other

minds have taken these steps before you, but you, following them, feel that you are the pioneer, putting this and that together and drawing a conclusion, seeing one vista after another open before you, leading into regions where you, at least, have never been hitherto. Alston had said: "You will learn to love physics," and so it proved. Lanny was fascinated by the order he perceived in this infinitely complex universe, and the time came when the "fissionating" of the atom became to him a game, a hunt, a race—even without the thought of the Nazis to be beaten, even without the thought of having Berlin blown up ahead of New York !

X

So passed the warm summer months; pleasantly, so far as bodily affairs were concerned, but with heavy strain of the spirit, because of the dreadful duel of death going on in Eastern Europe. There had never been a battle like it in all history; some nine million men, fighting day and night over a front of eighteen hundred miles. It went on for weeks, for months . . . it might go on for years. And so much depended upon it, everything that Lanny Budd cared about—the future of mankind. It was a constant temptation to turn the radio dials and hear the latest bulletins. Lanny kept himself at his studies only by saying: "If we can destroy Berlin, the Germans will have to fall back, no matter how far they have got !"

The Germans were on the offensive, so they had the advantage of knowing where the next blow was to come. They could prepare a blow at one place and then at another; they could feint, make it appear that their purpose was to take one fortress, then drive heavily toward another. A great wilderness in Eastern Poland, the Pripet marshes, divided their forces into halves. And where would their heaviest blows come, toward Leningrad or in the south? The heaviest blows seemed to come everywhere. The Panzers rolled, and crashed through the Russian lines; the Russians fell back; everywhere it was withdrawal after withdrawal, defeat after defeat, and that is the most discouraging kind of warfare.

Very soon the Germans were on Russian soil; and the Russians were following their promised "scorched earth" policy, as they had seen the Chinese doing for many years, leaving no food, no shelter for the foe. The Nazi radio blared proclamations of tremendous victories, the surrounding and capturing of whole armies. You had sworn never to believe anything that Dr. Goebbels said, but you could never quite stick to the resolution. Even the worst liar in the world might tell the truth when he had everything going his way.

But this much was certain: the Soviet Armies were fighting. They fought all through that summer; and every time they killed a Nazi, it was one who would never invade Britain; every time they shot down one of Göring's flyers, it was one who would never bomb London. The Soviets appeared to have an endless supply of men; and they had materials—what Uncle Jesse had said was true, they had been starving themselves to make munitions, because they knew they had a deadly foe on their doorstep, and the time allowed them was short.

The northern half of the Wehrmacht headed for Leningrad, and with the help of the Finns they got to the very gates. Then began one of the most dreadful sieges of history; a whole population of a great city, half-starved and fighting for their lives, bombarded day and night, not merely by planes but by heavy siege guns. Workers in factories were turning out munitions even while the roof of the building was falling about their heads. What helped to save them was the fact that their half-mad Peter the Great had built this city in a marsh, and all around it was soft ground, impossible for mechanized armies, at least until it was frozen.

But in the south were the dry rolling steppes and the farmlands of the Ukraine, which Hitler had publicly announced as one of his desires. Nothing to stop him but rivers, and these are easily crossed by modern armies. So all those collective farms which Lanny had read and heard about were now being laid waste; those mines and bridges and dams—the great Dnieprostroy, which had been to the Russians, and to friends of the workers everywhere, a symbol of hope, a promise of a new society. "Collectivism plus electrification equals Socialism" had been Lenin's formula, and the Russians had starved and toiled to attain this goal—the only case in history in which a nation had managed to industrialize itself without foreign loans. Britain and America had had a century and a half in which to do it, but the Soviet Union had had less than two decades. And now it was all being laid waste—great gaps blown in the dam, and the waters rushing down into the Black Sea, which did not need them. For these losses men and women wept in their hearts all over the world.

XI

Would the foe press on towards the south-east, to get the oil of the Caucasus, or would he turn northward and take Moscow? This was one of the questions of the hour, and another had to do with the undersea war in the Atlantic. In the spring the British losses had been a hundred thousand tons a week. Now all ships travelled in convoys, and Churchill claimed that the losses had been greatly reduced; but

was he telling the truth? It was a secret widely whispered that American naval vessels were escorting the convoys far out from American shores; the isolationists clamoured, charging one more crime against That Man in the White House. How long would it be before the U-boats sank an American warship, and the fat would be blazing in the fire?

Professor Einstein would come over about once a week, always in the evening, and hear his pupil recite. He would lecture and answer questions for a while, always lucidly, and exactly at the level of the pupil's understanding. Then he would say: "Enough for to-night!"—and suddenly the roles would be reversed and Lanny would be the teacher. Einstein knew that Lanny's father made warplanes, and he knew that Lanny had been in Europe recently and had many connections there. He never asked a question about these, but he would ask Lanny's opinion about the prospects, political as well as military, in the different lands.

The P.A. was delighted to discover that they were completely at one in their ideals and hopes, for this great scientist had not been content to limit himself to his specialty, he was a humanist as well as a physicist. He loathed war, as every truly intelligent man must do, but he saw that this war had to be won and Nazi-Fascism uprooted from the earth. He agreed that nothing would come from the victory unless an international government was formed; unless the nations would surrender some of their sovereignty, as the states had done when the American union was formed. He was a believer in the people, a fundamental democrat who knew that democracy in politics was good, but that it was not enough; before there could be any real freedom there must be democracy in industry, the worker must be the master of his job. In short, the greatest thinker of modern times was a Socialist; and when he admitted it to Lanny he didn't say: "Don't mention it!"

XII

Once they had an adventure. Lanny had been working especially hard, and had triumphantly recited several formulas without an error. Suddenly the master of all formulas grinned and said: "Let's play hookey!" When Lanny asked: "What shall we do?" he replied: "Alston tells me you play the piano. I play the fiddle; let us have some duets. You come to my place—it is late and nobody will notice us. I'll lock up the house and we won't answer the bell."

So they went, by unfrequented streets, as though they were two burglars. The great scientist lived in an elderly undistinguished house

which had doubtless been the first he looked at, and which he would probably occupy for the rest of his days. "One room is as good as another to think in," he said, "provided that nobody disturbs you." As he led the guest into the old-fashioned parlour he added: "But some music is better to play than others. What do you like?"

"Anything that pleases you," replied Lanny, "provided it is not too difficult."

"What do you say to Mozart's sonatas?"

"Fine! I have played them with Hansi Robin."

"Oh! You know him?"

"He is married to my half-sister."

"Oh, then you are one of us! Why didn't you tell me?" He put his arm impulsively about his pupil's shoulders and led him to the piano. "You must be a real *Musiker*. We shall have an *Abend*!"

He got out the music and spread the piano volume on the rack. "Where shall we begin? With the *Number 1*? They are all delightful. They take me back to my happy youth." As if eager to get there quickly he took out his fiddle, tuned it, and set the music on the stand. "I almost know the first one by heart, but not quite." He tucked the instrument under his chin with a silk handkerchief; then: "Are you ready? One, two, three"—and they were off.

There is no adventure more delightful in all the world; you skip and you dance and you sing in your heart; and always there is another voice answering your singing, another pair of feet skipping and dancing in time. You race through the meadows, and the flowers nod and bow to you, the wind sweeps over the fields of waving grain, you hear it sighing in the pine trees, or maybe roaring on the mountaintops; you hear the birds singing, you see little waves dancing, and the sunlight strewing showers of golden fire upon the water. Then suddenly you realize that all this is going to die, and you grow very sorrowful, and walk mournfully for a while; but even your sorrow is made beautiful, deprived of all disharmony. Then the sun comes out again, and it is springtime, and you realize that life renews itself; you skip and dance faster than ever, and it becomes a race, most exhilarating; you rejoice in your powers, the fact that you are equal to all emergencies, even to *allegro assai*.

When they had finished *Sonata Number 1* the entranced fiddler asked: "Shall we have another?" (Just like many a toper whom you have known!) Lanny said: "If you will," so they played another set of movements, repeating the same emotions, but with endless variety, like life itself. Nearly two centuries ago there had lived in old Vienna a child prodigy who had played the clavichord, and had been taken by his money-hungry parents to exhibit his skill in most of the courts of Europe. Melodies of unimaginable loveliness had been

born in his soul, and he had laboured incessantly, composing more than six hundred works of every classification. He had died young and poor, after the manner of genius in a heedless world; but his printed notes lived on for the delight of gentle and harmless souls through all the ages.

"Shall we have another?" asked the toper; and so they played the *Number III*. When they finished he sighed, as one coming down from heaven to a distracted earth. His usually pale cheeks were flushed and his eyes were shining. Said he: "That is enough. We are a pair of bad boys. Nobody has a right to be so happy until this war is over."

Lanny went back to his cottage, thinking that this elderly Jewish cherub was one of the most delightful human beings he had yet had the fortune to meet.

XIII

In mid-August President Roosevelt went on what appeared to be one of his customary vacation cruises off the New England coast. Swimming was the only form of exercise he could take; and also he liked to catch fish, or to try. This time he was after unusually big ones; he boarded a Navy cruiser at sea and was carried to Newfoundland, where he met a British battleship with Winston Churchill on board; also Harry Hopkins, who had been flown to Russia for a series of conferences with Stalin. Various other Americans, including Charlie Alston, had managed to disappear from Washington and to show up in what Churchill called "this Newfoundland bight."

Discussions went on for several days, and when all those concerned were safely back home the news was given out. They had adopted for the future world a series of eight principles which came to be known as "the Atlantic Charter." Lanny listened to them over the radio and wished that he could have known about the matter in advance; he would have tried to persuade the Chief to include a forthright statement in favour of an international government, the measure upon which Einstein was so insistent. But Lanny couldn't be everywhere and couldn't do everything; just then he was studying processes and formulas having to do with the production of uranium isotopes.

New documents were brought to him almost every night; he kept them locked in a suitcase out of sight. Early in September there came from New York a messenger with a brief-case chained to his left wrist and fastened with a padlock. The messenger had the key, but was pledged not to use it until he was in Lanny Budd's presence; the padlock was to make sure that he didn't forget the brief-case in a train or

restaurant. Inside were carbon copies of material, and a memorandum of instructions, telling Lanny that he was to make no notes, but to learn the material by heart and then never mention it except as per orders.

While he studied, the messenger went into town and saw a motion picture; when he returned and found that Lanny was not yet through, he went to another theatre, and saw another programme, a total of eight hours spent, including time for a meal. At the end of that time Lanny knew the formulas and processes for the large-scale production of plutonium, and the results of various experiments in use of graphite and of paraffin as " moderators " of the too-great ardour of neutrons. The unsigned memo from Alston read: " This is for England, not elsewhere. Will explain later."

That sounded immediate; so Lanny was not surprised when Professor Einstein came in next evening, and remarked, quite casually: " Mr. Budd, I think you now know everything about the subject of physics." He said it with a twinkle in his eyes, of course, and Lanny received it with a grin. The great thinker was as full of fun as F.D. himself.

" You mean that I know enough for this job ? " asked the pupil, and the reply was: " I award you a diploma, *summa cum laude*."

Lanny responded, without smiling: " This has been the most interesting thing that ever happened to me, Professor; and when this war is over, maybe you will let me come back and really learn something."

" I'll let you come and play duets with me every night," replied the author of *The Special and the General Theory of Relativity*.

19

Even to the Edge of Doom

1

CHARLES ALSTON had come to New York again, so Lanny met him there and took him for another ride, this time in Central Park at twilight. The car rolled in a stream of fast traffic, along a winding drive with vistas of trees on the one side and tall buildings making a background of lights on the other. Lanny listened, first to thanks for his diligence as a student, and then to an outline of his future tasks.

" The man you are to interview is Professor Heinrich Thomas

Schilling. He is, as you may know, a Nobel prize winner in physics and one of the greatest authorities in the world. When last heard from he was at the University of Berlin. Now we have reason to believe that he is in a laboratory near Oranienburg. It is your problem to find him and devise some inconspicuous way of interviewing him. To this end you will go first to London and consult with the English physicist, Professor Oswald Hardin, who has been in contact with Schilling and knows more about the situation than anyone else. Hardin was in Berlin for several years and is Schilling's friend. By the way, the details I sent you the other day may be given to Hardin; but you are not to give any information to Schilling, only to get it from him."

"Suppose he questions me?"

"You will pretend that you are ignorant. We are told that Schilling is completely anti-Nazi, but there is no use trusting any German more than we have to. If Schilling is on the level he should not ask questions. Your impression of his character and attitude is one of the things which will be of importance to us when you come out."

"If he is double-crossing us, there wouldn't be much chance of my coming out, I should think."

"That does not necessarily follow. He might be told to give you misinformation, with the idea of causing us to waste time and money on false leads. This much is certain—he will know that you are not coming into Germany out of unselfish love of scientific truth."

"How will he know who or what I am?"

"Professor Hardin will give you a password."

"And how will Hardin know me?"

"He will be expecting you."

"Let me point out, Professor: so far nobody has been allowed to know that I am a P.A. except the Governor himself. I wasn't even sure that you knew it. And I know from all three of the top Nazis that they have agents in England and are sending instructions and getting information all the time."

"We have to take chances in this case, Lanny; you cannot just go into Germany and look up this Schilling and say: 'I am an agent of President Roosevelt; tell me about the uranium project.'"

"I grant you that; but certainly I ought to do everything I can to keep my tracks covered."

"You can take precautions to meet Hardin secretly, as you have done with me. He will certainly understand that."

"How am I to get into England this time?"

"F.D. told me he would arrange it personally with Churchill."

"Understand, Professor, I'm not trying to waltz on this job; but I want to succeed and not fall into some Nazi trap. I don't like the idea of having my name discussed over the transatlantic telephone."

"You may count upon it that the Governor has made sure his conversations with Churchill are not being listened in on."

"I don't doubt for a moment that he thinks he has made sure. But I know something about the tricks of our foes, and the years they have been getting ready for what is happening now. They have planted their agents all over the world, and have tapped a lot of wires and broken a lot of codes."

"Well, take that up personally with the Governor and if you have precautions to suggest, do so. He may have information that he wishes to entrust to you and you alone. He is going to be at Hyde Park this week-end, and you are to get in touch with Baker in Poughkeepsie."

Lanny was required to repeat the names of the two scientists, and the details about them. He added: "I will look them up in the library and learn everything that is available. When I get to Berlin, I'll use the library there to the same end."

Said Alston: "It may be that you will get enough from Hardin. What you need especially is a pretext for meeting Schilling. It may be that he has some interest in art; he might own a painting worth viewing, or some relative might have one. It might be that you have a suggestion about having his portrait painted. Do you know anybody in Germany who might perhaps care to paint a Nobel prize winner?"

"I might think of somebody," replied the P.A. "I have met all sorts of art people in Berlin."

"All right; and now, one final word, Lanny. You must remember that you may be carrying the fate of the democratic world in your keeping. If your mission should fail, if you should discover that you have walked into a trap, you must deny that you have any knowledge of what we are doing with the nucleus of the atom. You must stick to that story through every cross-examination, and even through torture. You must remain the art expert and nothing else. You have been in Princeton making a catalogue of the Curtice art collection, and your only dealings with Albert Einstein were Mozart duets."

"All that goes without saying, Professor."

"You must realize that you will face frightful tortures. The Nazis will use every device in their catalogue to break your spirit. I want you to carry with you this tiny glass capsule. It contains cyanide, and if you bite it and swallow it quickly, you will be out of their reach in a minute or so. That will save you a lot of misery, and save the rest of us the possibility that in some moment of delirium you might blurt out a word or a phrase—say 'graphite moderator,' or something like that."

II

Lanny had two days' vacation before his appointment at Hyde Park, and he planned that to the best advantage. He drove to Newcastle to say good-bye to the family. They found nothing strange about his having been cataloguing an art collection, and were interested in what he had to tell about life in the Curtice family. They found it less easy to understand why and how an art expert should be returning to Europe in wartime; but they had long since learned not to ask about this. Robbie revealed that he had a business appointment with Reverdy Holdenhurst in New York for the following day, and the son accepted an invitation to join them at lunch.

On his way back to the city he paid a visit to the Hansibesses. Very touching to see what had happened to them; it was as if a wet sponge had been passed over their recent unhappiness and wiped out everything at a single stroke. Bess's beloved Soviet Union was in peril of its life, and nobody with any trace of social feeling could doubt which side he was on. Hansi was completely at one with his wife, and both of them ashamed that they had quarrelled. Lanny said nothing about the part he had played in this domestic dénouement.

Bess told important news; they were going to Moscow. She had made the offer to Oumansky, the Ambassador in Washington, and he had cabled, suggesting the invitation. "We are to be honoured guests of the Soviet Union, and will play for the people in all the cities. That may not do much to win the war, but it will at least tell them where our sympathies are."

They turned on the radio and listened to the news. The Germans were within a couple of hundred miles of Moscow, and had got east of Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine; things looked black indeed. With all three of them it was as Bess had said about herself—everything within the limits of that vast land was their personal property and its destruction their personal grief.

III

Back in the city, Lanny dined with Zoltan Kertezsi, and told of his picture deals; Zoltan reported on the job of getting the Detazes out of the vault in Baltimore and having them packed and shipped to Reubens, Indiana. Later in the evening, the P.A. dropped in on Forrest Quadratt. Things were getting hot for a registered Nazi agent; the F.B.I. was hounding him, he reported, and he might soon be needing help from his friends. This clear-sighted man wasn't fooling himself; he said the situation was bad in the United States,

and he wasn't altogether happy about the Russian campaign either. "Our friends count the number of miles we advanced and the number of prisoners we take, they fail to realize the number of miles that barbarous country has, and the endless masses of human cattle. Also, the dreadful winter is coming on."

Lanny didn't want to appear too mournful, so he refrained from repeating what the Führer had predicted, that the campaign would be over in one month, or in two at the outside. Instead, he remarked: "It may be that the Wehrmacht is prepared to fight in the winter. They have uncorked so many miracles."

"We shall need them," declared the German-American. "If anybody had told me that it would be possible to line up the British and the American governments in support of the Red terrorists, I should not have believed it."

"Nor I, Forrest. But at least we have learned who our enemies are."

"You are telling me! We won't need much research when we are ready to compile a shooting list."

Lanny went to Baldur Heinsch, and carefully dropped a hint, but the other failed to take it. Presently the P.A. ventured: "By the way, what about those important persons who were going to rid us of that worst enemy?"

"They seem to have all dived underground. I don't hear anything of what they are doing."

"It would seem that this is their time, if ever."

"I agree with you. I was hoping that you might have news about it."

Lanny was disappointed, but it wouldn't do to pursue the subject. Could it be that the steamship man had become suspicious? Or had he made up his mind that the son of Budd-Erling wasn't going to help anybody to kidnap the President of his country, but just chat about it amiably?

The way to meet such a situation was to give news, not to seek it. Lanny remarked: "By the way, Herr Heinsch, you know my father sometimes drops hints about the aeroplane industry. He knows I am not especially interested in the subject, but I hear him talking to others, and what he says might be of value to you without doing any harm to him."

"By all means tell me," adjured the other. It was amusing to see how quickly the conversation came to life.

"It appears that several companies scattered over the country are working on projects for rockets that will carry bombs; also they are designing planes that will fly by means of the rocket principle—'jet propulsion,' they call it. They are expected to attain unprecedented speeds."

"Thank you, Lanny; that may be very important indeed." The P.A. smiled inwardly, knowing that the Germans were working on such plans, and their men must know that the British and Americans were not entirely asleep. But evidently a steamship man hadn't been told !

IV

Next morning there were letters to be written, and a bank to be visited. Then came lunch in the dining-room of the Ritzy-Waldorf, and it turned out that Reverdy knew Alonzo Curtice—such an inconveniently small world it was ! Reverdy was a Princeton man and knew about life there, including the fact that German-Jewish refugees were being harboured by this fashionable university; Reverdy considered it a somewhat unfortunate precedent. Usually the Baltimore capitalist was a tactful person, but this time he overlooked the fact that Robbie Budd's only daughter was married to such a refugee !

He was greatly interested to hear that Lanny had been making a catalogue of the Curtice collection, and asked if the expert would consider his own collection worthy of such an honour. Lanny took this as one more effort to lure him into Green Spring Valley. He remarked that the collection would make a rather small catalogue; something which the collector was free to take as a hint if he chose. Let him commission a competent expert to find more old masters on his next trip !

The collector said : " I am starting my cruise the first of November. Don't you want to come with us ? " This was the third time he had made the same suggestion; both of them knew what he meant by it, and each knew that the other knew, which made it slightly awkward.

" It would be great pleasure," replied the younger man, " but unfortunately I have made commitments. I may be flying to Britain any day now."

" We are going to see a bit of the Orient. My wife has a friend, a woman physician, whom I have undertaken to deliver to her post in South China. Then we plan to spend a while at Bali, one of the loveliest spots in the world."

" It sounds most tempting," remarked the polite Lanny. " But aren't you the least bit concerned about war conditions ? "

" We didn't have any trouble last winter. I have the American flag painted large on each side of the vessel, also on the deck, and I keep everything well lighted at night. The German raiders have been pretty well cleared out of the South Seas by now; and anyhow, they are not interested in a private yacht."

" I'd hate to take a chance on it, Reverdy, if they happened to be short on food or fuel."

"They'd leave us enough to get to the nearest port. If you ask me, Lanny, I'd say you are running more risk in flying to Britain."

Lanny let it rest there. Courtesy required him to mention the family, so he asked: "Is Lizbeth going with you this time?"

"She hasn't made up her mind," replied the father. "If you'd go, she'd come; and I'd be happy to invite anybody you'd like to have along."

"You are too kind, really. I can think of nothing I'd rather do, but I have engagements abroad that it wouldn't be decent to break."

His thought was, this persistence was in the worst of taste. It was a phenomenon he had noticed among the very rich, and especially the sons and daughters of the very rich; they were used to having what they wanted, and took it as a right; they gave up with extremely ill grace. It didn't seem probable that Reverdy Holdenhurst himself admired Lanny Budd extravagantly; they were too different in tastes and activities. But Lizbeth wanted Lanny, and Reverdy wanted Lizbeth to have what she wanted; he *had* to want it, because otherwise she would give him no peace—she wouldn't even come on his yachting cruises! Lizbeth was a third generation of the very rich, and it was even harder for her to endure the outrage of not being able to satisfy her heart's desires. Lanny decided that this family which thought itself so very elegant was in reality somewhat crude.

v

These thoughts led his mind to Laurel Creston, who had to make her own way in the world and was doing it. Surely it wouldn't be a sin to have another drive with her, before departing on a dangerous errand. Lanny called her on the telephone, saying: "I am going on a journey, and I wonder if I might have a chance to say good-bye."

"By all means," she replied cordially.

"I have a peculiar proposal. I have a client who lives up the Hudson, a two or three hours' drive. He has asked me to be there at nine this evening. He usually keeps me a couple of hours, and then I drive back to New York. The place is near a town, and it has occurred to me that you might take the drive with me, and spend the interim in a picture show. One can always learn something from a movie, even if it's only how bad the movies can be."

"It's a date," she said. "When and where shall we meet?"

"The usual place," he said. "We'll leave early and have dinner on the way. Say five o'clock? And bring something to read, so that if the show is too bad you can sit in a hotel lobby."

VI

Having a couple of hours to spare, Lanny telephoned his Uncle Jesse. They met in the usual way, and drove up Madison Avenue and into Central Park. Inevitably they talked about the Soviet Union; the older man was not above saying: "I told you so!" He was extremely proud of the show his adopted Fatherland was putting up. "You see, they fall back, but they do not run away."

"You are right, Uncle Jesse." Lanny knew what pleasure it gives people to hear that. "I hope they will be able to keep it up."

"What is to prevent them? The farther they retreat the shorter their lines grow, while the farther the Germans advance the greater their difficulties. They have to change the gauge of the railways and they will surely not be able to do it before winter."

"I agree with all that, Uncle Jesse."

"Also, you notice that the Soviet staff work is not so incompetent as you feared. There's a reason which I pointed out to you long ago. You were shocked by the purges, but now you see what they meant. There are no Quislings in the Red Armies, and no traitor groups among politicians and journalists at home. Compare that with France!"

"I must admit the totalitarian system is more convenient for war, Uncle Jesse. But I am one of those tender-minded fellows who don't like to see people killed."

"It has been going on for a long time in the world," said the tough-minded one, "and never faster than now."

"Well, you may join me in grief for all the young Russians who are dying."

"It has been happening on those vast steppes for many centuries, Lanny. It will not matter in the end, for they have not yet lost the courage to breed—as has been the case with the French for the last century, and nowadays in this classic land of capitalism. I observe that my nephew has reached the age of forty, and has contributed only one little girl to posterity."

Lanny broke into a laugh. "And how about my Red uncle? Has he got some posterity hidden away?"

"I am a freak, Lanny; one of those fanatics who dream of changing the world, and I cannot do a double duty."

"Don't worry, Uncle Jesse. Your nephew also has a duty, and some day he may have the pleasure of telling you about it. How long do you expect to stay here?"

"Not more than a few weeks. Then my address will be the Kremlin."

"So, you are going back! Are you expecting to join the fight?"

"Old men for counsel, young men for war. The Soviet authorities

think I can give them advice about the building of the underground in France, and also in their dealings with their new ally, the U.S.A."

"I find it encouraging," ventured the P.A., "how this country has rallied to the support of the Soviet Union in peril. In future it will not be so easy for our journalists to lie about the Reds."

"It is like spring sunshine after a long winter," agreed the ex-deputy. "But don't let it fool you. Capitalism will always find way to lie, for that is its nature. When it has no enemies abroad it lies about itself and the members of its own family. Every manufacturer lies about his product, every salesman about his sales. The whole system of competitive commercialism is built on falsehood and couldn't survive without it."

"I see the old phonograph records haven't been cracked by the war!" Lanny smiled. "Are you certain that nobody ever lies in the Soviet Union?"

"Come and see!" challenged the other.

"Do you suppose they would let me in? A bourgeois person who lives by selling the products of other men's genius?"

"Joking aside," declared the other, "you ought to get some idea of what the new world is going to be like. I'll vouch for you and get you a permit."

"Joking aside, Uncle Jesse, that's very kind. But I have a job to do, and some day you'll admit that it was worth doing. Meantime don't mention me to anybody. Good luck to you and your Red Army!"

VII

The place agreed upon with Laurel Creston was a street near her apartment house. She took seriously Lanny's desire not to be known as a friend of "Mary Morrow," and walked around the block to make sure that no one was trailing her. It was a cloudy afternoon, with a touch of autumn in the air, and her cheeks were flushed, whether from the exercise or from the pleasure of seeing him. When she had stepped into the car and they had exchanged greetings she said "I hope it is not too dangerous a mission you are going on."

"Not especially so," he replied. "I shall probably be flying to Britain."

She told him: "I have another short story coming out next week."

"Too bad that I shall miss it."

"I have a carbon copy with me. You may read it, if you have time, and then destroy it. I shall have no use for it when it is out."

"Keep it until this trip is over," he replied. "I'll read it in my hotel room and then make a little bonfire."

They were driving on upper Broadway, once the old Albany Post Road; they crossed a bridge and passed through a village with the odd name of Spuyten Duyvil. Laurel was answering his questions about her novel; she had not started it yet, but she had some ideas and told them. The subject had become dim in his memory after two months of nuclear physics, but it came back quickly and he was interested again. He remembered suggestions which had occurred to him before the atomic bomb had exploded in his mind.

Later he told her that he had had lunch with her Uncle Reverdy and she said: "I am to lunch with him to-morrow. It will seem strange not to mention this drive, but I think it will be better so."

"Have you told him that you are Mary Morrow?"

"I don't think he would be interested in my stories; I'm not sure that he approves of women writing at all, and certainly not of their finding fault with the social order. You know how conservative he is."

"Indeed, yes. I think he has the general idea that it is dangerous to find fault with any government anywhere, because the Reds might profit from it."

"My Uncle Reverdy is a strange man. Underneath his reserve he is extremely unhappy, and his mind is a mass of frustrations. Do you know the sad story of his marital misfortune?"

"Yes, my mother told me."

"It was your mother who told me, also. I had to go to the free-spoken Riviera in order to find out about my own family."

Laurel herself was by no means free-spoken, in spite of her best efforts. She did not put into words anything about the "misfortune" of a man whose wife had found him in the embrace of a maid-servant; she just said: "Aunt Millicent cannot forgive him, and he cannot forgive her for not forgiving him; so they go through life with the doors of their hearts locked, never speaking a word of their real thoughts. I cannot imagine anything more destructive to the human soul; I sometimes think that Uncle Reverdy cannot forgive society for having let him be born, or God for having made him what he is."

"Tell me what you think of Lizbeth," ventured the man.

"Lizbeth is a child, and will remain that so long as she is sheltered from all experience and handed everything she wants on a silver platter. What chance is there for her to develop any of her faculties? I sometimes think that the child of indulgent parents is more unfortunate than an orphan. They ought to be taken away from their parents and raised in communities where other children have a chance to give them social discipline."

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Lanny added: "It seems to me especially bad where two parents are competing for a child's favour."

"Exactly so! Uncle Reverdy and Aunt Millicent have done their best to keep Lizbeth from knowing about the disharmony between them, but of course she must be aware of it. When she decides to go on a yacht cruise or to stay at home, she is taking part in a family war. It would have ruined any child who wasn't naturally so gentle and kind."

Lanny said: "Some day you should write a story about such a family!"

VIII

In the city of Poughkeepsie they found a motion-picture theatre with a hotel near by. Lanny told her where to sit in the theatre so that he could find her; if she was not there he would come to the hotel. Then he drove a short distance, parked his car, and promptly on the minute strolled past the corner appointed. A car halted at the kerb, and Lanny stepped in. As a rule there were two men in the car, but this time Baker was alone. He flashed a torch upon Lanny, and then the car sped northward up the river road.

They did not enter the Krum Elbow estate by the main drive with the sentry box in front; they went in by a lane through a grove of trees ready for the Christmas market. A sentry stopped them, but Baker had the entrée and they approached the house by a rear door. Here was another sentry—Lanny would have been happier if there had been half a dozen, but he knew that America wasn't used to war and didn't yet realize that it was at war. American destroyers were being attacked by German submarines, but the American public hadn't been told.

The visitor was escorted by a rear stairway, and into the comfortable bedroom with the chintz curtains and the grate fire; it was a chilly evening and the Boss had on his blue crew-necked sweater. But there was nothing chilly about his mood; he welcomed his caller with a grin, and when the door was closed he said: "Hi, old atom smasher!" He would always have some fancy greeting like that; he would carry with laughter the most crushing burdens of state. A P.A. would be invited to recite the formula for the production of plutonium—not because F.D. would recognize it, but because it was fun to pretend to.

But don't imagine that he wouldn't get down to real business. It wasn't more than a minute before he was saying that this was the most important errand upon which he had ever sent a man, and that P.A. 103 might count it a compliment. "The task will call for all the

discretion you possess, Lanny; and if you bring home this piece of bacon you can have pretty nearly anything you ask for."

"All I'll ask is another assignment, Governor. I'm not planning anything else until we have knocked the Nazis out."

"You won't let me put up your expenses for this trip?"

"I have just sold a bunch of my former stepfather's paintings and I am flush. What troubles me is how I'm going to get into Britain without making myself known as your agent."

"You won't need to be in England more than a day or two, and I am having Baker provide you with a passport under an assumed name."

"But, Governor! The photograph and the fingerprints!"

"We have ways of arranging such matters. We may have to tip off one person."

"What worries me is that you think it is only one person, but in practice there will be a clerk or a secretary, and perhaps a sweetheart. Let me remind you that there is a B4 man by the name of Fordyce who has me on his very special list; he's bound to have my photograph and fingerprints available."

"If he catches on, it will probably be after you have left, and that will be all to the good for you; he will be certain that you are a Nazi agent who has managed to slip through his net. If he does happen to catch you, you will have to tell him that it is top secret and that he is to go directly to Churchill."

"Churchill knows about me?"

"I have told him that a man will call. He has something to tell you that he doesn't want to mention even over our telephone."

"But how can I get access to Churchill without other people knowing it?"

"That is something we have to work out. I will give him your code name, Zaharoff, when you are due in England. Is there somebody you trust who could go to Churchill and say that name?"

"I have a boyhood friend in England, the playwright Eric Vivian Pomeroy-Nielson. I have never mentioned you as my Chief, but he knows that I am getting information for some high-up person, and I'd be surprised if he hasn't guessed it is you."

"Would he have access to Churchill?"

"He is rather too far to the left. But his father, the baronet, would certainly have it. He has several times helped Rick by getting some vital news to the papers without its source being known. He did that with the set of proposals that Hitler was trying to force upon Prague in the spring of 1939."

"All right then, your baronet goes to Winston and says 'Zaharoff,' and Winston arranges for him to bring the mysterious person to him at night, just as you have come here."

"You understand that Churchill knows me. We saw quite a good deal of each other at Maxine Elliott's, on the Riviera, in the winter before the war."

"A delightful person," said F.D., who had just come from a three-day conference with His Majesty's First Minister.

"Didn't you find that he talked too much?" inquired the P.A. with a grin.

"Sometimes," was the reply; "but you know that I, too, have a weakness for telling stories."

"Personally I didn't mind, because I had come to hear him. I did get a chance to warn him concerning Hitler's purposes, and I found that he agreed that Hitler was a more dangerous enemy than Stalin. But he was quite sure that he personally would never have to deal with the problem; he described himself as a 'political failure,' and said that the Tories had put him on the shelf to stay."

"They have dusted him off," said F.D. "He is an extraordinary figure, and the man for this hour."

"He knows it," ventured Lanny. "He is playing his role as consciously as any other stage star."

IX

The arrangements for a P.A.'s job having been completed, the "Governor" talked about the Atlantic Conference and the making of the Charter. He had recognized in the Duke of Marlborough's seventh lineal descendant another master showman, a worthy companion at political arms, and now told about him with gusto. Inside that body was a stout heart; he was the British lion incarnate, and roared at the foe in language the like of which had not been heard since Shakespeare had put words into the mouth of King Henry the Fifth. Roosevelt described him on board the cruiser *Augusta* smoking his big cigars—and Lanny didn't have to imagine F.D. matching him with several cigarettes, for here he was, half sitting and half reclining in bed, and slipping one after another into the long thin holder which he tip-tilted when he wanted to assume a jaunty air.

He listened for the second time to Lanny's description of the British leader wearing a worn red dressing-gown and a floppy straw hat; sitting by the blue-green swimming pool of a retired stage queen and discoursing on the conflict which then loomed so darkly upon the horizon. The P.A. said: "He pumped my mind dry about Hitler and Göring and Hess, everybody in Germany I knew. Beaverbrook was there. I remember that he questioned me especially about Hess; he knew that Hess professed to be a Buchmanite, and the Beaver

seemed to have the idea that this movement was going to save Britain from having to fight a hard war."

"That is interesting," commented F.D. "Beaverbrook joined us on the *Augusta*, and had a lot to say, as you can imagine. He told me that he had been one of the first to interview Hess after the landing in Scotland."

"I suppose Hess knows by now that he's not negotiating to get Britain into the war against Russia."

"He was allowed to hear Winston's speech over the radio."

"What a story!" exclaimed Lanny. "If a playwright had invented that, we should call it melodrama."

"They say it has thrown Hess into a spell of melancholia, and it is doubted if his mind will stand the strain."

"Poor Rudi!" exclaimed his false friend. "In a happier world he might have been a useful man. He isn't especially bright, but he was capable of complete fidelity, which you must know is not the most common of virtues. The code name I gave him was Kurvenal, who was the friend of Tristan in Wagner's opera and was described as 'the truest of the true.' I should be interested to have a talk with him now."

"You might suggest it to Winston, and ask him to arrange it."

"I am afraid it wouldn't do. Whatever the Nazi agents in Britain are doing, they can hardly fail to keep track of what is happening to their Deputy Führer."

"You might think up a plausible pretext for having been allowed to see him. You might be going to Hitler with some message from Hess."

"I'll think about it," Lanny said. "But I am afraid this war has long since passed the stage of negotiations. Churchill has committed the unimaginable crime of supporting the Bolsheviks; and so have you."

"You like my speeches better now than you used to?" inquired the genial great man, with a smile.

"Indeed I do, Governor!"

"You recall what I told you the first time you came to me. I couldn't go any faster than the people would let me. I had to wait, and let events change their minds."

"No kidding," said Lanny, "I think your handling of this crisis will be studied as one of the miracles of history. I have been tempted to despair many a time; but you seem always cheerful and sure."

"Ah, my lad, that's because you're not here after you leave the room!"

X

Lanny observed the customary stack of documents on this busy man's reading-table, and he took it as a silent monitor. But he permitted himself one question before offering to depart. "Governor, you have so much better sources of information than anybody else. Tell me one thing: will Russia stick it out?"

"There is no question that she means to; the only question is, will she be able."

"What do you say about that?"

"Harry Hopkins has just come from Moscow, where he spent several days with Stalin. He is convinced that Stalin means to fight it out to the end, no matter how bitter. He has given positive assurance that they will hold out, even if it means giving up the whole of Russia; they will retreat into Siberia and continue the struggle with whatever they have left. They ask us for supplies, of course, and we shall do everything in our power to meet their needs."

"Does Hopkins think they can hold out?"

"He has no doubt about it. He says they are only in process of mobilizing their immense reserves. They are moving their machinery eastward and their manpower westward. The old men and the young and the women will do the work. Stalin says they will bleed the Wehrmacht to exhaustion, and in the end they will overwhelm it."

"All right," Lanny said. "On that basis I can go ahead with my job. By the way, I had another talk with my Red uncle. He says just what Hopkins says, but of course in his case it may be wishful thinking. He tells me he is going back to Russia—they will make an older statesman of him, a foreign office adviser. He invites me to come there and says he can get me in. It might be that you will some day have an errand for me there."

"I'll bear it in mind," replied the Chief. "For the present you have your hands full. Take care of yourself, for you are one man I should hate to lose."

"Thank you, Governor; I'll do my best to come back." Lanny was conscious of the tiny capsule which he had sewn into the lining of his coat; but he didn't mention it. "I know you have several men's work to do, so, unless you have something else to tell me, I'll toddle."

"You might give my personal regards to Professor Hardin when you see him. I met him shortly after the last war, when I was in England, but he probably doesn't remember it."

"I'm guessing that he may have recognized your picture in the papers," said Lanny with a chuckle. He received a clasp from that large strong hand, and then went out into the hall.

XI

F.D.'s Negro attendant sat dozing in one chair and Baker sat in another. He rose and escorted Lanny downstairs. On the way back to Poughkeepsie he said: "I have been instructed to get you a plane reservation to Scotland by way of Newfoundland. I will have the ticket to-morrow, and your plane leaves Port Washington airport the day after to-morrow at 10 a.m. I was told to choose a name for you, so the ticket reads Richard Thurston Harrison. I hope that doesn't happen to be a real person."

"I don't happen to know him," replied Lanny. "And what about my passport?"

"I will attend to that in the morning. Professor Alston gave me your real name, Mr. Budd, and instructed me to arrange these matters for you. You need not worry about my having your name, because I am a man who keeps his mouth buttoned tight."

"That's all right, Mr. Baker, but won't you have to tell somebody in the State Department?"

"No, because the President has ordered that in case of need I am to receive passports already stamped, and I am to fill in the name, the fingerprints, and the photograph myself."

"But then the records in State won't contain anything about me."

"That is true, but it won't matter unless you lose the document, or unless someone becomes suspicious of you. In that case you will have to cable or telephone to me, and I will fix it up with the right party."

"Have you been told of the fact that Lanning Prescott Budd has been put out of England by B4 and forbidden to return?"

"Yes, and that's an awkward matter. I take it that you don't want to tell B4 that you are a presidential agent."

"Surely not, if it can be helped."

"I suggest a scheme that may work, and can't do any harm. I will provide you with a second passport in your own name, and you may sew it in the lining of your coat and not use it until you are landing on the Continent."

"It's hard to see how that could work, Mr. Baker. There are the fingerprints and the photograph."

"There are little tricks that can be tried, and that may work. The fingerprints on your false passport can be slightly blurred—a bad job, but you wouldn't be to blame for that. The photographic negative can be doctored—it is you, but it is not entirely like you and can hardly be recognized by anyone who knows Mr. Lanning Prescott Budd. The official on duty at an airport is not apt to know you, I take it."

"That is true, but if they have any suspicion of me, they will search me and find the second passport."

"In the first place, I don't think they will bother with details because you will be arriving on a government transport. Civilian service has been ended over that route and the planes are carrying only persons whom the government sends. So the stamping of passports is pretty much automatic. If it comes to a showdown, you will have to say: 'This is an Intelligence matter.' There will be a secret mark on the passport which their top man will know about."

"Well, of course," said Lanny, "if you have magic like that!"

"We have it," replied Baker. "We have a great many men working on the Continent for one purpose or another, and the British pass them through. The code is changed now and then, but your mark will be fresh. When you leave England you will destroy the false passport. I take it that you can come home by way of Lisbon and the Azores, and not by London."

"If I can get passage."

"Tell me, is your father in on your secret?"

"Only to the extent that I am doing some government work. He doesn't know for whom."

"The name of Baker won't mean anything to him. When you reach Lisbon, telephone him to wire me at my street address. As soon as I hear from him I will get busy and make the reservation at this end and notify your father and he can notify you. Enemy agents won't find anything suspicious about your communicating with your father about coming home."

"I don't see any flaws in that," said Lanny. "Where shall we meet to-morrow?"

"I will come to New York and get a hotel room and ask you to come to me, if you don't mind. That will be less conspicuous. Hartley Robinson will be my name for the purpose; and you are Richard Thurston Harrison. Don't forget it."

"I have a lot to remember," said Lanny with a smile. "But I guess I can add that, Mr. Robinson."

XII

Lanny had himself set down on a street in the city of Poughkeepsie which had once been an Indian village, "the Reed-covered Lodge by the Little Water Place." He strolled to the theatre and had no trouble in finding his lady, who had taken a seat in the location agreed upon. Said she: "I have witnessed a terrible murder, and now I shall never know who committed it."

"There are millions of murders nowadays," he replied, "and no one but God will ever know who committed them."

He would have liked to tell her where he had been and what he had learned—about the Soviet Union, especially. She would have got a thrill out of it. But he couldn't afford even to let her guess, as she might easily have done, knowing that Hyde Park was only a few miles away. Complete silence wouldn't have been either plausible or polite, so he thought it wise to make up a story to account for his evening. He took one of his Chicago clients and moved him to the Hudson River valley, and told her a strange tale about an elderly gentleman who passionately loved beautiful paintings and yearned to possess them, but only now and then could buy one, because most of the money belonged to his wife and it always meant a quarrel.

"What does the woman want to buy?" asked Laurel, and he told her that the woman didn't want to buy anything, she wanted to build up her fortune. She had inherited it from her father, and she thought that she was honouring him by following in his footsteps and becoming richer every day.

This led to the subject of the strange distortions which money causes in the personalities of human beings. "Money is power," Lanny said. "Money commands respect and obedience from other people, and not everybody has the strength of character to carry such a responsibility. The very rich discover that all the world is trying to get some of their money, and they become haunted by fears, they conceive irrational hatreds and shut themselves away—their hearts and sometimes even their bodies."

He told about old Miss van Zandt, whose Fifth Avenue mansion had been gradually surrounded by the clothing trade, and who lived in constant terror of the Jewish workers who paraded up and down the street at mid-day, eating their sandwiches; in her sight they were all Communists, so she gave fortunes to Nazi-Fascists who came along and promised to put down this enemy. He told about a wealthy gentleman who was certain that the revolution was just around the corner, and who spent all his money for things and hid them away in safe places—any sort of things, for only things would have value. This gentleman saw a vision of himself peddling his possessions in a black market in order to buy food to keep alive.

Laurel in her turn told about one of her relatives, whom she did not name. An elderly lady who entertained with great liberality and enjoyed the presence of her friends; but her daughter could not bear to see money spent on other people, even though the daughter had her own fortune. She had figured it out that one ought to be able to entertain guests at dinner for a cost of not more than seventeen cents per person, and she tried to limit the servants to that. The result was that the mother was very lonely, and all the servants were occupied in

cheating the household. Things mysteriously disappeared, and whenever the daughter went away the mother had a party.

"What is your remedy for such things?" inquired Laurel, and Lanny answered: "The abolition of inheritance. I have come to the conclusion that it is the most evil force in human society. It poisons the lives of most of the wealthy families I know. Even where they do not openly quarrel, the children are sapped of all vitality, all initiative. Our conservatives talk glibly about 'free enterprise'—I should like to tell them that the first step to preserve free enterprise is to make it plain to every young person in the world that when his education has been completed he has to go out into the world and make his own way, and that he can never have a chance to spend a dollar that he hasn't earned by his own efforts."

Thus easily solving human and social problems they drove back to the great city in the small hours of the morning. Only when they were close to Laurel's apartment house did the conversation take on a personal tone. She asked him: "Is this really not a dangerous mission you are going on?"

He thought that he noticed a trembling in her voice, and it was like an alarm bell to his ears. He would only have had to say: "Does it mean so much to you?" and the fat would have been blazing in the fire. But F.D. had bade him use discretion; so he replied: "It is hard to be sure. We cannot be less willing to take risks than our enemies." Then, after a little thought "Write me some of that novel in the meantime."

XIII

After a sleep, Lanny got in touch with Baker again, and the two passport books were prepared. "I, the undersigned, Secretary of State of the United States of America, hereby request all whom it may concern to permit safely and freely to pass, and in case of need to give all lawful aid and protection to"—this much in Gothic type. Then came his name, and the customary thirty-two pages, including five to identify him and tell him what he must not do—to enlist in foreign armies, and so on. The document was invalidated for countries at war—a long list—but Lanny meant to go into some of them, even so.

He wondered: did Baker know where he was going and what for? In all probability not. This man with the tight-buttoned mouth asked not one question, and the only personal remark he made was: "I have been in this business a long time." That was after the passports were completed, and Lanny had expressed doubts as to his skill in sewing one of them into the lining of his coat. Baker offered to do it;

he had learned that art, along with the retouching of photographic negatives and the sand-papering of fingertips in order to reduce the clearness of prints.

Lanny had the rest of the day free; and just as he had made up his mind to visit the library and look up Professors Hardin and Schilling, the telephone rang. It was Laurel, saying: "Can you spare me a few minutes? It is something important."

Of course he said he could, and met her on the street as usual and drove her into the park. He had not seen her so troubled since the night in Hitler's Berghof, when she had come to his room and told him of the Führer's alarming advances to her. This time it was the spirits who were troubling her; less than an hour ago she had been in a trance, with her friend Agnes sitting by making notes. Otto Kahn had announced himself, and reported the presence of an old gentleman with a white beard who said that his name was Eli Budd. "Did you have such a relative, Lanny?"

"Yes," was the reply. "He was my great-uncle. I met him several times in my youth."

"Did you ever tell me about him?"

"I don't remember; I probably did, because he left me his library, and it's in my studio. I generally tell people how I got all those fine books."

"Did you ever show me his picture?"

"It is hanging on the studio wall, and I may have spoken of it."

"That tends to spoil things; but I don't remember it consciously. He was described as having a thin, ascetic face; a tall old man, slightly stooped, and with a gentle voice."

"That is correct. He was a Unitarian preacher."

"What he said was: 'Tell Lanny to postpone that trip. A calamity confronts him.' He repeated three times: 'Danger! Danger! Danger!'—and then faded away."

"That is very interesting indeed, Laurel."

"It frightened me terribly. I made excuses to Agnes and came out and phoned you from a pay station."

Again Lanny might have said: "Does it mean so much to you?" But a voice said: "Danger!"—and more than three times. What he said was: "Here is one of those cases where you don't know what to think. You were contemplating trouble that might come to me—you spoke of it last night. And of course all those facts about Great-Uncle Eli may have been in your subconscious mind; certainly they were in mine. You go into a trance and your subconscious makes a little drama out of it."

"You don't believe in premonitions, then?"

"I am forced to believe in them; I have read of so many cases—

they are as old as history. But that doesn't mean that every fear is a genuine premonition. If we believed that, we should have a hard time living at all."

"You can't postpone this journey?"

"Not possibly, Laurel. You can't imagine how hard it is to get plane reservations these days."

"But even for a day or two?"

"Listen, my dear. Did that voice say *how* I was going to be in danger?"

"No; only what I told you."

"Well then, what can we conclude? We are in danger of a collision here in Central Park. I might be killed on the way to the airport. I might easily be killed trying to get about in the London blackout. An astrologer once told me I was going to die in Hong-Kong, and I am surely not going to Hong-Kong on this trip. Why shouldn't his premonition be as good as Otto Kahn's? The psychical researchers have collected statistics as to premonitions that came true, but who has ever counted those which failed to come true? My guess is, they might be ten to one, perhaps a hundred to one."

Thus cheerfully he tried to console her. He took her to dinner in a small obscure place, and made himself as agreeable as possible—as if that would help! When he left her, just around the corner from her home, he said: "I cannot cable you from England, but I will send you a postcard to let you know I am safe. I mustn't sign my name—I'll make it 'Brother,' which may touch a censor's heart."

"Good night—Brother," she said. He wondered: was there a faint touch of irony in her voice?

Those in Peril on the Sea

ROBBIE sent his man in to town, and Lanny drove him to Port Washington on Long Island, then turned the car over to him and saw him depart. When he was out of sight there occurred a metamorphosis of Lanning Prescott Budd into Richard Thurston Harrison. The traveller had left his old suitcases in the car because they bore his initials; he had left in them every piece of paper which might have

identified him; he had even removed from his clothing the cleaners' marks which sometimes contain initials. He stepped aboard the plane a new man; and several hours later he stepped out upon the soil of Newfoundland, at the Gander airport near the long lake of that name.

This was a military airport of immense size, built jointly by British and Canadian air forces. Now America was sharing the use of it—part of the strange process of getting into a war by walking backwards, with her eyes fixed upon peace and her voice loudly declaring that she was not taking a step. Here were Pan-American Airways employees still wearing their blue serge uniforms, very natty, but civilian service was suspended and they were carrying only such passengers as Army and Navy and State requested, and the government paid the bills. There was a field of large drums full of petrol, arranged in rows, and vast new construction going on, which visitors were not encouraged to inspect.

This village by a cold blue northern lake had become one of the greatest air centres in the world; large planes of many types assembled here from all over Canada and the United States; they flew away, and only a small percentage came back—just enough to return the pilots for the next flight. The plane which was to convey the mysterious Mr. Harrison was drawn up near the entrance to the field, with the steps in position against it. A Boeing four-engine transport, it looked weather-beaten but substantial; Lanny guessed that it was one that would bring pilots back. His baggage was put on board, but he was told that there would be a delay, the weather conditions were not satisfactory. Some distance from the field were radio towers, and in the office building men sat with earphones and got reports from weather stations half-way round the world. Storms were definite things and their paths could be charted; they were especially common at this equinoctial season, and upon them depended whether the plane would fly to Greenland, Iceland, or Scotland.

Such matters were in the hands of the higher powers. Mr. Harrison strolled about for a while unlimbering his legs; then he found a seat on a bench and became absorbed in an exercise which had become second nature—the recital of the formulas and techniques of atomic disintegration. But he didn't continue this very long; the place beside him was taken by a blond young man in the navy-blue uniform of Pan-Am. He lighted a cigarette, took a couple of reflective puffs, and remarked: "Lots of fog these days, and how we hate it!"

Lanny was willing enough to chat; there would be time for mental recitations during the flight. The man, in his early twenties, said that he had left college to become a navigator during this crisis. He was not the navigator of Lanny's plane; he had come in early that morning and had a sleep and would be going out in a couple of days. "A

lonesome place," he said, "and nothing to do. The natives don't get enough to eat, or perhaps they don't know how to cook it."

He discussed the life of these new style "ferry-men." Nothing about the number or types of planes, or anything that could be a military secret, and he didn't even ask the name of his auditor. He just told human stuff; a funny life, for you lost four hours every time you went east, so you were never hungry at mealtimes or sleepy at bedtime; then, just as you had started to get used to it, you flew west and gained four hours, and then you were hungry before mealtimes and sleepy before bedtime. You were a man without a country and your watch was always wrong. You could stand it, because they paid you eight hundred a month and expenses; the pilots got a thousand.

Then he talked about the route, which had no land and a superfluity of weather—that surely was no military secret. There were fogs, and all your pilot could do was to follow the beam. There was a robot pilot to help him; the Americans called it the "Iron Mike," the British called it "George." There would always be ice, and the radio would give you a "freezing level" below which you had to fly. Pan-Am had a flying system of which it was proud; the engineer plotted at brief intervals what was called "the Howgozit curve," a synthesis of five curves showing the miles flown versus the number of gallons of petrol consumed, the number of gallons versus the hours of flying, and so on. On the basis of that chart the captain determined the so-called "Point of No Return," and if the figures were not right he turned back before the point was reached.

"Were you ever in an accident?" inquired the traveller.

"I was in the drink once. I spent seventeen hours in a rubber boat before the Dumbo found us."

"What is a Dumbo, if it is not a secret?"

"Didn't you see the motion picture of the elephant who learned to fly by waving his ears? A flying boat has a big awkward body and we make fun of it, but believe me, it looks perfectly wonderful when you are soaked to the skin and your fingers and toes are beginning to freeze."

"Do you keep this route going all winter?" the traveller wanted to know.

"We didn't think we could, but now we're doing it because we have to. We have a plan that we call 'pressure pattern.' We don't try to follow the great circle route; we don't bull our way through storms; we get continuous information as to high- and low-pressure areas and work by that. We have learned that wind in a low-pressure area blows counter-clockwise into the middle of the area, while it blows clockwise out of a 'high.' So we sneak to the place where the wind will boost us along."

The traveller said: "Some two hundred years ago there was an English poet who predicted something like that. He was writing about the Duke of Marlborough, who was Winston Churchill's ancestor:

"Calm and serene, he drives the furious blast,
And, pleased the Almighty's orders to perform,
Rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm."

"Swell!" exclaimed the navigator. "Where do you find stuff like that?"

The sociable airman got up, remarking that he had come west and was hungry ahead of time. He strolled away, and his place was taken after an interval by a tall gentleman of about Lanny's age wearing a brown business suit somewhat rumped. He was chewing nervously on an unlighted cigar; now and then he spat, and then swallowed, and his Adam's apple rose up out of the collar of his blue shirt. "I don't like this damn weather," he said. "Look at that"—and he pointed to the low rocky ridges of Newfoundland, from which the morning fog had only just been dissipated, and where already the evening fog was drifting in.

"Yes," Lanny replied. "They have the Gulf current and cold air and that makes lots of fog."

"Do you mind if I talk?" inquired the stranger.

"Not at all."

"My name is Aglund."

"Mine is Harrison."

"Do you like this flying business?"

"I've sort of had to get used to it."

"I've never been up, and I'd have sworn I never would. They wanted me to fly here from Cleveland, but I came by train and boat—the damndest jerkwater railway across this island or whatever it is. And the poorest country and people I've seen since I left Georgia."

"They live by fishing and lumbering, and those are hard trades."

"I suppose so. They tell me they haven't been able to meet the interest on their bonds, so they are in hock to the British government; they have lost their constitution."

"Indeed?" Lanny said. "I hadn't heard that. Money talks."

"Money wouldn't get me to come up here to this God-forsaken icebox and fly away into a snowstorm."

"What does it, then?" asked Lanny, smiling amiably.

"I'm a specialist in machine tools, and they told me to go and

help the British learn to work one of our heavy presses. Am I bothering you ? ”

“ Not at all, if it's not a military secret. ”

“ It's no military secret that I'm nervous as a wild colt. You think there's something wrong with me, but I had an experience last night that has given me a bad case of the jitters. I had to sleep sitting up in the train, and maybe that had something to do with it; anyhow, I had a nightmare and I can't seem to shake it off. ”

“ What was it ? ”

“ Did you ever hear of dreams coming true ? ”

“ Yes, of course. It's a common idea, as old as history. ”

“ Then you won't think I'm some sort of a psycho ? ”

“ Not at all. I have read about such subjects and they interest me. ”

“ Well, I dreamed that I met my mother. She's been dead about twenty years, but it was just as real as if I had been a boy at home. I put my arms around her and gave her a hug, and I felt her firm solid body—she was a chunky, hard-working woman. I kissed her on the cheek, and then she whispered in my ear: ‘ Son, don't go on that plane ! Don't go on that plane ! ’ I woke up in a cold sweat and I've hardly been able to think about anything else since. Have you ever had an experience like that ? ”

“ Yes, ” Lanny said. “ I have had them, and I know others who have. A strange thing, I had something of the same sort only yesterday. I have a woman friend who is a medium and goes into trances. Yesterday afternoon she came to me in a state of excitement, to tell me that someone claiming to be the spirit of my great-uncle had appeared and given a warning for me not to take this journey. He said the word ‘ Danger ’ three times. ”

“ Jesus ! ” exclaimed the man. “ And you are going on that plane ? ”

“ I *have* to go, ” Lanny said.

“ Well, I don't ! Look at that old crate ! ”

“ It looks like a pretty solid one to me. ”

“ They are using everything they can lay hands on, and they drive them till they fall to pieces. ”

“ That one needs a coat of paint, ” Lanny ventured. “ Otherwise it may be O.K. ”

“ Have you thought of the possibility that somebody may be doing a bit of sabotage at these bases ? There are Germans all over this country, and why shouldn't they be trying to help their own side ? ”

“ I don't think they'd do anything more than once. Not in this place. ”

“ Well, once would be enough for you and me. Brother, do you know what you and I ought to do ” ”

"What is that?"

"Go for a walk and get lost in those pine forests that I saw a hundred miles of—or maybe it was five hundred. After a couple of days we could come out and it would be some other plane."

"What good would that do?" inquired Lanny. He couldn't keep from smiling, even though he, too, was troubled in soul. "Maybe the danger our ancestors were warning us about was of getting lost in a pine forest and starving to death."

Mr. Aglund had risen to his feet and was looking about him nervously, as if he thought someone might try to put him onto a plane by force. The unlighted cigar was beginning to fall into shreds from the violence of his chewing. Suddenly he turned upon Lanny and said: "Whatever kills me, it won't be that old crate. Good-bye, brother, and good luck to you!"

He turned away and strolled casually toward the entrance gate. He passed out of sight behind one of the buildings, and that was the last Lanny ever saw or heard of him.

A bell clanged. One bell meant for the crew to go to the plane, and Lanny stood and watched them do so. The four engines began their "revving," and there was a lot of noise, and dust flying away from the plane. After a while two bells clanged, and that was for the passengers; half a dozen men, some in military, some in civilian garb, gathered at the steps. The captain took their tickets, checking from a list. Lanny, very polite, was the last; and the captain noticed that one was missing. "Aglund," he said, and looked about. "Where's Mr. Aglund?"

"He told me he wasn't going," Lanny volunteered. "He's afraid of

"Well, I'll be damned!" exclaimed the other, and stared. Apparently it was something new in his experience. "Where's he gone?"

"He said he was going to get lost in the forest. He thought that would be safer."

"Well, I'll be *God* damned!" declared the captain. Then he shrugged his shoulders. It wasn't his responsibility to keep bloodhounds and hunt fugitives. "What'll I do with his baggage?"

"I suggest you put it off; he'll come back for it."

A valise and a duffelbag were set off, and Lanny entered the big transport. It was like no plane interior that he had seen before. All the comfortable seats and other appurtenances of luxury had been removed, if they had ever been there. The space was packed pretty solid with crates and bundles covered with heavy canvas and

bound tightly in position to rings in the floor and the struts. There were ropes enough to make a regular spider's web. Barely enough room had been left for the six passengers; Lanny wondered where they had expected to put Mr. Aglund. You could sit on a camp chair, or you could fold it up and lie on your back, with your feet stretched out if you didn't mind having them walked over. For anyone who objected, the answer was becoming more familiar every day: "Don't you know there's a war on?"

There would be no heat in this transport, so everybody had to put on a soft flying suit, like overalls, and over that a waterproof and windproof sort of jumper, and over that a life jacket, called a "Mae West." There were parachutes, also, but what good would they do in the middle of the North Atlantic? Nobody put them on.

Lanny, the last man to enter, had barely space enough to sit in. Crates were on one side of him and on the other a man whose name had been read off as Carlton; he must have been six-foot-four and broad in proportion, by his dress a lumberjack or some sort of outdoor man, perhaps a horse breeder going over to take charge of army mules. One by one the passengers were fastened to the wall by heavy leather belts, and while this ceremony was going on Lanny remarked: "I hope these crates don't roll over on us." Seeing the grin on the other's face, he added: "Don't *you* roll over on me!" The man said: "I'll try to keep underneath," and that was all there was to the conversation, for at that moment the four engines started full speed. There were no soundproof walls to the plane, so nobody tried to talk unless he had something important to say. Carlton smiled at Harrison and Harrison returned the smile. Looking back upon this afterwards, Lanny wondered if it had been those friendly words and looks which had been the cause of his life being saved.

The wide curved door was shut and fastened and the plane was in motion. It rocked and bounced on the runway, and then suddenly these motions ceased and you knew it was airborne. By-and-by one of the crew came and made signs indicating that the passengers were free to unstrap themselves, and they did so, and made themselves as comfortable as possible on a floor of aluminium alloy. Four of them elected to play cards, with their feet tucked under them Buddha fashion. Lanny elected to stretch out and close his eyes and recite atomic formulas until he fell asleep.

IV

The flight was to Iceland, which lay to the north-east, a matter of sixteen hundred miles. It would take somewhat less than eight hours, though you couldn't be sure, because of this new method of "pressure

patterns." Since all the flying would be by instruments, day and night were the same; "blind flying," it was called, and every pilot had had to learn to trust the instruments and not try to use his eyes. Presently they were in a storm, and the plane began to buck and dip; somebody became airsick and had to use his can, which was unpleasant in these crowded quarters. Lanny wondered: had the pilot failed to find the right pressure area, or was this part of the programme? Nobody had told him anything at the outset and nobody told him now. In civilian flights, for which you paid your good money, there was a charming stewardess to murmur assurances into your ear; but now that the government paid, you were just one more package to be delivered to a certain destination. Six boxes containing supper were handed out, but only two were opened, and Mr. Harrison's box was not among them.

Lanny dozed, he didn't know for how long. Then he was startled into wakefulness by a terrific lurch of the plane which slid him along and pressed him against the crates; it slid Mr. Carlton on top of him, in spite of all promises. And hardly had the man wriggled off before there was another yaw and they were sliding in the opposite direction. The freight creaked and groaned and the ropes that bound it appeared to stretch and strain. The thought came to Lanny; what would happen if those ropes should work loose or break? Human bodies might be pounded to pieces by the heavy stuff. He recalled a scene in one of Victor Hugo's novels, about a cannon breaking loose on a frigate in a storm, and racing here and there like a live thing gone mad.

The passengers stared at one another, and shouted their doubts and fears. Lanny, who had never encountered anything like this, wondered if it was a consequence of letting a storm carry you, or something extra and unforeseen. Was it possible for pressure areas to sneak in and escape the vigilance of weather observers? He knew that there were sudden local tornadoes in Alaskan waters; they were called "williwaws." Did they have these on the way to Iceland, and keep them secret on account of "military security"?

It seemed as though the great plane had been seized by a giant hand and was being hurled this way and that; sideways, and then up and down. Suddenly it seemed as though you were being pressed hard against the floor, and then as though the floor were disappearing beneath you—the strange feeling you get when an elevator in a tall office building suddenly starts down. A man's insides became displaced and his diaphragm refused to work. The lights wavered, and the six passengers caught hold of one another in the effort to keep themselves steady. Lanny locked hands with the big outdoor man and was impressed by the warmth and firmness of his clasp. It was reassuring, in conflict with the blind forces of Nature, so powerful, so

utterly irrational. A high wind is a lunatic turned loose upon the surface of the sea. An earthquake, a volcano, is a madhouse turned loose beneath the earth's surface. What a pitiful thing is man—and what a tragedy that he should destroy himself in war, instead of turning his efforts against these cosmic energies !

This couldn't go on very long ; no construction made by man could stand it. There was a cracking sound, and suddenly the lights went out. The plane tipped crazily, and one of the crew rushed into the compartment, shouting into their ears : " Put on your lifebelts ! We are going down ! "

Lanny had read that a drowning man reviews all the incidents of his life. Now, told that he was facing a horrible death, nothing of the sort happened to him. His thoughts were few and simple. The first was : " This can't happen to me ! Out there in that storm, that blackness and waste of icy waters ! " Then he thought : " My job ! My message ! All the work I did, the lessons I learned ! No, I must get to Germany ! "

It was not true that his thoughts came any faster. He had no track of time, but he thought of those formulas, all that study, and for nothing ! They would have to get somebody else, and three months would be lost ! A maddening waste of life ! And could it be sabotage ? Had something been done to the plane ? Had it been sent off on false information ? And then thoughts of the warnings he had received ! The psychic researchers had been right after all ! There were such things as premonitions ! And after studying the subject for so long, he had refused to heed the warnings ! If only he had gone off with Aglund—for a day, two days—until the omens were right " *Absit omen !* " the ancients had said ; but Lanny, super-sophisticate, hadn't paid even that slight tribute to the fates and the furies !

Bulleted this way and that, members of the crew dragged in a rubber life raft ; it had a device which would inflate it automatically in a few seconds, and the passengers had been told how to work it. Lanny who had read and heard much about planes, knew that everything depended upon how this transport hit the water ; if it came down at a steep angle they would all be crushed, but if the pilot still had control and could level off at the surface, the plane might stay afloat for several minutes and they would have a chance to get out. Lanny threw himself onto the floor, face down, with his feet toward the front of the plane and braced against the cargo. That was the way to break the shock and save one's head and neck.

He was just in time. There was a terrific shock, and it seemed to him that his body collapsed like an accordion; an agonizing pain, and screams—he didn't know whether they were his own or other persons'. Everything was dim from that moment; he was dimly aware of blows, seeming to come from many directions; it was the plane, hitting wave after wave before it slowed. Men were thrown this way and that, and on top of one another. Lanny heard them shouting, trying to get the door open. Apparently they succeeded, for there was a rush of wind and water. He tried to drag himself; his legs were helpless, but with his arms he got near to the door; then he became aware of a pair of strong hands seizing him and a voice saying: "Come on, now!"

He must have fainted; the blackness of the night and the blackness of his soul became one. Afterwards he thought he could recall a few moments of consciousness; of lying in the darkness with icy cold water being hurled over him, and forces tossing him this way and that; his pain was so great that he didn't want to know about it, and perhaps that was why he sought refuge in unconsciousness again.

Looking back on it afterwards, he decided that for all practical purposes he died that night; the experience taught him that he need never be afraid of death. There could be pain before it, but there was no pain after it; when you were dead you were dead. You didn't find yourself transported to glory, no angel handed you a golden harp and invited you to play or sing; you didn't meet the spirits of your ancestors—Great-Uncle Eli Budd talking New England transcendentalism, Grandfather Samuel Budd laying down the law from the ancient Hebrew Scriptures. There came no Tecumseh, grumbling at "that old telepathy," no Otto Kahn, making sophisticated fun of himself, no Zaharoff, "that old man with guns going off all round him." Maybe your subconscious mind went back to join these other subconscious minds, but your conscious mind didn't know anything about it, or about anything else. Such, at any rate, was the conclusion the amateur philosopher drew from the experience of that night. "A sleep and a forgetting!"

VI

The faint beginnings of new consciousness were among the strangest experiences of this philosopher's life. They came and went, and appeared to be a bewildered effort to catch hold of themselves, to make sure if they were there and what they were. Voices, dim and wavering seemed as though they were floating in air and had no connection with anything else in the universe. That was the way it might have been in the spirit world, and Lanny's thoughts began to shape themselves around that idea; he was dead, and was coming slowly to conscious-

ness in a new world. Would he meet people he knew there, and how would he know them? Was he himself, or was he some other person, or several persons? He felt pain, and why was that? What had happened to him? Slowly it came back to him: oh, yes, a plane, a wreck! And a mission to Germany! He had failed, and he shrank from the thought—he lost consciousness again, because he could not dare to face the terrible fact of his failure.

But the voices continued, floating in infinite vastness. He couldn't make out the words, but some of the tones were familiar; somebody in the spirit world whom he had known well. It was like groping his way in darkness, and there would come tiny gleams of light. He decided that the tones were Robbie's; undoubtedly, a man would know his own father's voice anywhere. But then, Robbie wasn't in the spirit world, so it couldn't be so. Lanny found the mental effort too great and gave up; the little spark of consciousness faded out. Perhaps he fell asleep, perhaps he swooned, perhaps he died again—who could say?

The spark came back, however, and Lanny remembered that it had lived before, and what he had thought—that his father had joined him in the spirit world. Now he could make out the words, and unquestionably it was Robbie saying: "You are all right, Lanny. This is your father. This is Robbie." Then it came to him—a truly startling idea—that maybe he wasn't dead, and that his father was with him, somehow, somewhere. The idea was too confusing and the spark failed again—for a minute, an hour, a day—Lanny had no means of judging the intervals.

As the awakening continued, little by little Lanny came to realize that the voice was really his father's, and it was his father's hand touching him. He opened his eyes, and it was his father looking at him and smiling. The effort was too much, and he had to close his eyes, and again there was a period of oblivion. He still had so much pain that he didn't want to face it, and not even the pleasure of seeing Robbie could compensate for it. He became aware that people were feeding him things through a tube, and that was unpleasant, too; however, Robbie kept assuring him that everything was all right, and that he was going to get well. Lanny would think of the mission to England and to Germany, and all the formulas, and how urgent it was; he would start shuddering with anxiety and grief, and again he would fall back into oblivion.

VII

What had happened Lanny found out later, a hint here and a hint there. He had been dragged out of the plane and onto the life raft, along with two other passengers and two members of the crew who

had survived the crash. Apparently the fury of the tornado had been higher in the air; the sea was not too rough, and somebody had lain to leeward of him and kept him from being washed away. The crew had had time to radio their position before the crash, and search planes had come even before daylight, looking for flares. In the morning the survivors had released a dye which coloured the water about them—that was one of the devices which were strapped to the raft. About noon a "Dumbo" had found them and taken them aboard and flown them to a hospital in Halifax.

Lanny was suffering from both shock and exposure, and in addition he had both leg bones, the tibias, broken below the knees. The hospital authorities considered it a miracle that he survived; they attributed it to a sound constitution and a temperate life, plus modern remedies which are so close to miracles. When this battered body had been carried in they had searched the clothing, and found a passport in the coat pocket and another sewed up in the lining. Manifestly, this meant some sort of secret war work, and since he didn't look like a Nazi, they guessed that he was an American agent. They sent two telegrams, one addressed to the next of kin of Richard Thurston Harrison at the New York address in the passport; since it was a fictitious address, this telegram was reported undeliverable.

The other was addressed to the next of kin of Lanning Prescott Budd, care Budd-Erling Aircraft Corporation, Newcastle, Connecticut, and that brought a result startling to a hospital superintendent. A voice over the telephone said: "This is Robert Budd, President of Budd-Erling Aircraft. Lanning Budd is my son. How is he?" When the answer was: "His condition is critical," the voice said: "I will fly immediately. I should be there in a few hours." Then, being a business-man, Robbie added: "I will pay all his bills, and if you save his life I will contribute two thousand dollars to your hospital fund." That is one way to assist a miracle, if not to cause it!

So Lanny was in a comfortable bed in a private room, and his father in the room adjoining. That busy man had shown where his heart was; he had dropped everything and come to sit by Lanny's bedside and whisper to him that everything was all right and that he was going to live. Robbie didn't know much about the subconscious mind—they hadn't mentioned it at Yale in his day—but Lanny had done a lot to educate his old man over the years. Robbie had heard it explained that you could give suggestions to the subconscious mind and that they would "take"; it might even be possible to do it without talking, mind to mind. Perhaps that was what made prayers work, for surely they did. Robbie didn't know whether he believed in God or not, and certainly if He existed He had made a lot of miserable people for no reason that a rational mind could discover; but if

sitting there and whispering to Lanny that he would get well would help him to get well, Robbie would try it. The hospital had a chaplain, a Church of England priest, who came and did the same thing, and Robbie found him a very decent fellow; they talked it over, and Robbie raised his bid—he promised the church a stained-glass window if his eldest son lived.

Somebody once asked Voltaire whether it was possible to kill a cow by enchantment, and that cynic replied: "Yes, provided you use strychnine, too." So the hospital doctors used not merely prayer but the new sulphur drugs, and blood plasma, and other remedies of their *materia medica*. Lanny was made as comfortable as a man could be who has each of his legs enclosed in a heavy plaster cast, from the upper third of the thighs down to the toes. (He had what the surgeons called a "spiral fracture," and they had performed an "open operation," putting stainless steel screws through the fractured part of the bone.) Little by little he came back to life and memory; the fever diminished, but still he babbled in his sleep, and it was all about the nucleus of the atom, and its positrons and neutrons and deuterons and what not. When the patient was well enough to be asked about it he whispered: "It is a mission, Robbie, and it is so urgent! I must get well quickly."

The father could do some guessing, for he had a lot of technical men on his staff and he listened to their conversation. When men are talking about jet propulsion they can hardly fail to mention atomic energy and the possibility that the Germans might get it ahead of anybody else. Robbie said: "Take it easy, son. It'll be a long time before you can travel again, and somebody else will have to be doing your job."

The sick man insisted: "Write a note to Professor Alston and tell him what has happened." That wasn't revealing any secret, for Robbie had long ago come to the idea that "Charlie" was the government authority who had charge of Lanny's comings and goings. In the old days this would have exasperated the father, but now it was all right. Anything to win this war—even the boondogglers!

When it was certain that Lanny was past the crisis, Robbie returned to his own job, and his place was taken by Cousin Jennie Budd, a member of the clan who was a confirmed old maid and lived in Robbie's household as a sort of upper housekeeper. She came by train; nobody was ever going to get her into one of those flying contraptions. She took the room next to the patient and read to him, wrote letters for him, smoothed his pillow, and told him stories about their numerous and eccentric New England family. Cousin Jennie didn't have the least hesitation about praying; she had been brought up to it, and never found fault with God, but told Him plainly what

she wanted and overlooked those cases in which He did not see fit to oblige her. She assured the son of Budd-Erling that some day God would let him know why He had allowed that plane to be wrecked. Something that Lanny was doing, or that somebody else was doing, that God didn't happen to approve ! Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven !

VIII

This two-thousand-dollar patient received the best of care. The superintendent did not fail to stop in each day and study the chart. The doctors, even those who had nothing to do with the case, stopped by to try out their bedside manner. The severe head nurse shepherded her flock and made sure they overlooked no duty. Each of the nurses, young or middle-aged, had her own career to think about, and no one of them overlooked what might be the chance of a lifetime. The story of the father's offer was known and it was reported that the family was fabulously wealthy. Suffering had not destroyed the patient's good looks, but had lent them a tender quality. The two passports also were talked about, and it was taken for granted that the injuries had been incurred in the service of Britain and Nova Scotia. While Lanny lay unconscious the nurses stroked his forehead and prayed for him ; when his consciousness returned they found him delightful, and prayed for him in a different sense of the words.

He was polite to everybody, but reticent, and soon they realized that he was tormented in mind. Asleep, he murmured a strange gibberish which nobody recognized, and sometimes he had nightmares, cried out, and struggled to lift his plaster legs. Something was preying on him, and the doctors feared that he might die of worry instead of shock. The superintendent, a man of experience, tried to probe his secret, but all he got was : " I have an urgent duty. How soon shall I be able to walk ? " The superintendent could only reply : " You can delay your recovery by impatience."

Matters got so bad that Robbie Budd came for another week-end. It was easy for him because, as he said, his place was lousy with planes. Budd-Erling was now making a two-seater pursuit job, and for these Halifax was practically in the backyard—a matter of a couple of hours' flight. Robbie had had a talk with Charlie Alston over the telephone, and brought the message : " Tell your patient not to worry. We are sending somebody else." All Lanny would answer was : " Oh, Robbie, it's so important, and nobody else can do it ! Anyhow it will take months to prepare ! "

" But look, son," the father pleaded. " You are setting yourself back. You can't mend broken bones with tears."

Lanny moved his head from side to side in helpless grief. "It ought not to have happened, Robbie! It's like a death—it's like thousands of deaths—millions of them!"

"You don't want to tell me about it?"

"I can't tell a word. I am on my honour."

"Well, there's nothing to keep me from trying to guess."

"No, but whatever you guess, don't say it here, don't say it anywhere. People here know too much already. What happened to my passport?"

"They found two of them."

"I feared they would. Did they find the capsule?"

"I didn't hear about any capsule."

"Well, forget it. Some day I'll tell you the story. Has anything been in the papers?"

"They don't publish much about the Ferry Command, Lanny. And certainly nothing about accidents to it."

"Thank God for that! Don't tell anybody whom you don't have to. Understand, I'm not worrying about myself, Robbie, it's the country."

"Now is the one time when you ought to be thinking about yourself and nothing else. You know so much about auto-suggestion—why don't you try it?"

"I'm doing my best. I'm fighting to reconcile myself to what has happened. It's the hardest job I ever had."

IX

The President of Budd-Erling went back to his own urgent tasks, and Lanny lay on his back—he could not turn over. It causes eye-strain if you read in that position, so the kind Cousin Jennie read aloud in a slow inexpressive voice whatever he asked for: newspapers, magazines, any novel that he could be sure was proper. But fiction seemed empty and thin; all he wanted was the war news, and especially Russia, which the prim maiden lady considered slightly objectionable. The Germans had about surrounded Leningrad and were drawing inexorably nearer to Moscow; this two-thousand-mile battle was beyond the scope of human imagination.

Robbie had brought a radio set, which could be used in a hospital room if it was kept very low. The Canadian radio, government-owned, is free of commercials, which is a blessing to any man, sick or well. There was plenty of news, and Lanny fed on this. The trouble came when the impatient patient closed his eyes and tried to sleep; then his mind went over the duties he had planned, the schemes

he had evolved—for Britain and for Germany; then he was like a wild lion in a cage, or a skylark beating itself to death against bars overhead.

Writing materials were brought, and with a pillow for support he managed to scribble notes on a pad. Mail out of Canada would be censored, he knew, so he wrote with caution. He doubted if a letter would go from Canada to Vichy France, so he had asked Robbie to write to his mother. To Rick he wrote: "I had an accident somewhat like your own, but at sea. I am going to be all right, but it will take time." Almost a quarter of a century had passed since Rick had crashed, but he had surely not forgotten it. To Zoltan he wrote: "I met with a serious accident, but am getting well." He wrote the same to Laurel Creston, and added the sentence: "Your fears were justified and I wish I had taken your advice." He signed that one "Brother," and hoped the censor wouldn't take it for code. To Lizbeth he didn't have to mention the accident, since Robbie had told her father about it. "Just a line to let you know I am getting along and will soon be all right. Excuse the scrawl. Best wishes."

A great deal depended upon those letters—more than Lanny could have any idea of. First result was a telephone conversation. There were no phones in the rooms of this hospital, but for a two-thousand-dollar patient they would get a long cord and run it from the hall. This was Baltimore, Maryland, calling Halifax, Nova Scotia, and that might be assumed to be important. The voice of Reverdy Holdenhurst, as clear as if he had been in the room. "We are getting ready for our cruise, and don't you want to change your mind and come along?"

"I'm afraid it's going to be some time before I can do any travelling, Reverdy." This from a man with legs that might have weighed fifty pounds apiece.

"We'll wait for you if you'll say yes. Nothing would give us more pleasure, and you'll have a complete rest and change; everything will be warm where we are going."

"Somehow or other I've lost my fondness for the sea, Reverdy. I don't enjoy thinking about it."

"A yacht isn't an aeroplane, and we choose our route carefully. The hurricane season will be over where we are going, and there isn't the slightest danger. We'll have a physician on board to take care of you, and we'll provide every comfort. We'll get one of those surgical carts such as they have in hospitals; and, as you know, we have an elevator on the *Oriole*. You can be taken from your cabin to the deck, and you can have sunshine or shade, whatever you prefer. If you stay where you are you'll be indoors all the time. Just think, the

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Caribbean, and Panama, then the South Seas, Samoa and Tahiti, and then South China, and Bali and Java. When you are able to sit up we'll have a wheel chair, and when you begin to walk we'll have a man to help you. Think it over!"

It was hard to say no to such a proposal. The father didn't mention that he had a daughter; if Lanny had any doubts whether Lizbeth would go, he could ask, but he didn't. All he could say was: "You are too kind. They don't give me any idea how long it will be before I can be out of these casts, and I couldn't think of putting you to such inconvenience."

"The casts don't make a bit of difference. We have plenty of strong men on board the yacht, and they can move you. I'd offer to come to Halifax for you, but I don't suppose they'd allow a yacht in those waters."

"It would be far too dangerous."

"Well, Robbie can have you flown, say to Miami. That's a pleasant place, and I'd wait there as long as you wished. No trouble at all for anybody."

It was a princely offer; the way the very rich treat their friends. Lanny knew exactly what it meant. The Baltimore capitalist was saying: "Come and marry my daughter. Your wounds and damages don't make any difference. Come and court her while we sail over warm tropic seas and marry her in any port you choose. Forget your cares and impossible duties, and come to the land of the Lotus-eaters!"

A land where all things always seem'd the same
And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotus-eaters came.

X

At other times Lanny had thought his friend's importunities ir- bad taste, but now that he was a cripple and couldn't expect to be an active man for some time, the offer became a kindness not to be undervalued. Lanny could only plead: "I have duties, Reverdy, which I am not free to talk about. You expect to be gone six months, and I hope that I shall be fit for duty again in less time than that."

"All right, if that happens, we won't try to detain you. Whenever you feel that you are well enough, you can take a plane by way of Honolulu and San Francisco. I suppose you don't expect to give up

flying for the rest of your life. What I want to do is to help you to get well in the quickest and surest way."

Lanny's final word was: "I'll think it over and let you know. I'll have to ask the hospital people."

He did this; and they told him he was free from fever, which meant that the knitting of his bones was proceeding satisfactorily. To move him in the casts would be difficult, but with care it could be done. In a week or two he should have enough strength to stand a journey. "That is," added the head surgeon, "provided you stop having nightmares." Lanny was doing his best, but it was a hard task to keep atomic formulas from racing through his mind.

This matter was so important that Robbie Budd took another week-end off. Said he: "Reverdy told me of his invitation, and we all think that's the thing for you to do, Lanny. So much better than lying here indoors in winter weather. It gets cold as the devil up here, you can feel it in the air already."

"Listen, Robbie," replied the son, "there's no use making any bones about it. Reverdy wants me to come because Lizbeth wants me to marry her; and if I take this trip, it practically means an engagement."

"That's an exaggeration, Lanny; no man has to marry unless he wants to, and I take it you haven't committed yourself."

"Surely not; but when a girl has set her cap the way Lizbeth has, it becomes damned uncomfortable, and I couldn't have any pleasure on that yacht unless I meant to oblige both father and daughter."

"Esther and I have talked about it a lot, Lanny, and we wish you would think about Lizbeth more seriously. We can't imagine a girl who would make you a more suitable wife; and surely you have taken time enough to look around. Tell me once more, and frankly: Is there some other woman?"

"There are several women I know with whom I might be happy. Lizbeth is one, and Peggy is another. But I have a duty which I can't reveal to any woman, and I couldn't make any woman happy while hiding such a secret from her."

"You haven't got up-to-date in your thinking, son. The fact that you had two passports and are some sort of government agent is surely being whispered about this military and naval port. There are bound to be German spies here, and for you to go back into Germany after this has happened would be a form of suicide. Surely you have to bring yourself to realize that!"

"I have thought about it a lot, Robbie, but my assignment is so urgent that I shall have to take a chance. I simply cannot quit!"

XI

Robbie talked with the doctors and then went back to Newcastle and phoned to Charlie Alston. "Lanny won't tell me what it is that is eating him up, but I am making a guess that you know something about it."

"I might find out," admitted the "fixer" cautiously.

"Well, here is the situation. It will be several months before he is able to be active again, and he is making it longer by his worrying. The doctors are having to give him sleeping drugs, and they don't like that and neither do I. He has nightmares and cries in his sleep; he recites long formulas, as if it were chemistry or mathematics. Now he has an invitation to take a yachting trip to the South Seas, which will give him a complete rest and make him fit for work again. But he won't go, because he insists that he has a duty and that he must get up—with both his legs still in plaster casts."

"I'll talk to him," said Alston. "Perhaps I can help."

So now it was Washington calling Halifax, and once again the telephone extension cord was plugged in. "Hello," said a voice, "this is your Paris employer. Hard luck, old scout!"

"I'm soon going to be fit again——"

"What I called up to tell you, that assignment is dead. We have got the information. The other party found a way to get it to us, and everything is jake."

"Oh, can that really be true, Professor?"

"I talked to the Boss and he says you have a furlough. You are to think about nothing but getting well. He won't see you again for six months, unless it's a purely social call."

"I believe you are kidding me!" exclaimed the P.A.

"I give you my word, I am repeating exactly what the Boss said. Tell him to put everything out of his mind but getting his health back; and thanks a million for what he did." Those were his words."

"Well, of course, that's a great relief. If you really don't need

"Put your mind at rest. We are going to win, not the faintest doubt about it. And you have done your share. Take it easy!"

XII

So there was Lanny, on this bed from which he had not moved for more than a month; he looked at the bare white walls which had been his landscape and the ceiling which had been his sky for that period, and he thought how pleasant it would be to look at something—any-

thing—else. Lying on your back can become an agony; you have to try it for a while to realize how loudly every muscle and nerve and bone cry out in protest. He lay there and stifled his groans. He exercised every muscle he could without moving from one spot. He counted the days which the doctors said must elapse before they would break off the casts and let him at least turn over on his side.

He recalled to mind the trim white yacht, the *Oriole*. Some of the happiest months of his life were associated with yachting trips; first on the *Bluebird*, namesake of Ezra Hackabury's kitchen soap, and then on the *Bessie Budd*, brought into being by Johannes Robin's speculations in German marks. On those two shining pleasure craft the grandson of Budd Gunmakers had visited all the Mediterranean shores, and those of the North Sea and the Baltic; he had sailed into the fjords of Norway, and crossed to Newfoundland and down to New York. But the farthest east he had ever travelled was Odessa and the farthest west was Hollywood. The places that Reverdy had named were strange to him, and certainly worth seeing. They would be warm—and Lanny found that he had the same dread of the cold as his would-be host, the skipper of the *Oriole*. Lanny couldn't recall much about that dreadful night on a rubber raft, but he still felt the effects of it, and wanted never in his life to be cold again.

He thought of Lizbeth, and to an invalid she wore a different aspect from what she had worn to a well man. Here in his helplessness he decided that he had been brutal to her in his strength; he had humiliated her, and failed entirely to appreciate what she offered him. Just to be alive, to be taken care of, to be saved from pain—these were blessings he was able to appreciate for the first time in his life. If she was willing to help him, to take the chance of restoring him to normality, what more could he ask of love and life?

Little by little he began to realize the implications of what had happened here in Halifax, and of what Alston had told him over the phone. He was no longer a presidential agent. F.D. had put it tactfully—he was "on furlough"—but all the same, he could never go back to Hitlerland, at least not until he wanted to throw away his life. Some German agent in this British naval and military base would surely have passed the word to the Nazi spy centre that was Yorkville, and from there it would have been cabled to Berlin. The Führer's personal friend, *Der Dicke's* art expert, had been revealed as a secret agent, travelling to Britain on two passports! The Nazis would surely blame him for the failure of Hess's mission, the trapping of the Führer's Deputy and most trusted friend. They would blame him for everything that had ever "leaked," whether or not he had had anything to do with it. They would hate him above all other Americans—those who had never pretended to be friends.

So, he would have to find another job ! And meantime he was free —to rest, to get well, to have a wife if he wanted one ! So there revived the old question : what sort of wife did he want ? Right now it appeared that Laurel Creston had faded into the background ; she was an intellectual, and his mind had gone into a coma. What he wanted was to escape any more pain ; and the thought of Lizbeth's soft arms about him seemed the very height of bliss. He didn't put it in that crude way, and might have resented it if anyone else had done so ; he just drifted along in a sort of half daze. He was exhausted, and didn't want to think ; even the conversation of Cousin Jennie Budd didn't bore him, because she didn't try to make him think. And when he drifted to the island of the Lotus-eaters, it was Lizbeth who sat by his side and held his hand. She would comfort him, treat him like a sick child, help him to learn to walk again.

He had been invited to take this journey with no conditions attached, and he could leave whenever he wished. After all, he didn't have to sign a contract to marry. He could go as any other guest, and see how he got along with the skipper's daughter. Maybe she wouldn't want to marry him when she discovered how good-for-nothing he was. Maybe he would never be fit to marry anybody. He saw himself gently dismissed, and again as nobly renouncing. In case of need, he could think of several polite pretexts.

Yes, that was the way to look at this cruise. He would have a chance to try out Lizbeth's mind. He would no longer have to conceal from her the fact that he was a Socialist in his sympathies ; not using that alarming word, of course, but leading her gently to a sympathetic understanding of the sufferings of the poor, the indignities of the lowly. After all, she wasn't to blame for her upbringing ; the fact that her mother and father hadn't succeeded in spoiling her was proof of what a sweet and gentle nature had been her endowment. He had never known anything wilful that she had done, unless you counted her determination to love Lanny Budd. And that was something not too difficult for a man to excuse.

XIII

Robbie, shrewd intriguer, had told Cousin Jennie about Lizbeth and the proposed trip. So this maiden lady was full of questions about the heiress : What did she look like and what did she do and say ? Lanny had to tell how he had met her at Emily Chattersworth's villa, and had visited her in Green Spring Valley, and about her home and her parents and the servants and country club and what not. A decorous New England lady would never ask if he had kissed her, but

she could hint gently that Lanny seemed lacking in ardour and wonder secretly if there was some other woman in his life. Cousin Jennie went walking and found a bookstore and brought back travel books about the West Indies and the South Seas, about Bali and Java. She read these aloud to her patient, and sighed at the thought of being able to visit these lands of wonder. The Magic City! The Pearl of the Antilles! The China Seas! The Spice Islands! Lanny, who had been raised on the Côte d'Azur, ought to have understood the device of making up fancy names for the tourist trade, but his critical faculties were less active at this time.

The owner of the *Oriole* called again. "We are ready to leave in three days, Lanny. What do you say?"

"I don't believe the doctors would let me go that soon, Reverdy."

"I renew my suggestion that we wait at Miami. There is an excellent harbour, and plenty to entertain us. Robbie tells me he will arrange to have you flown there. You can wait for good weather, and there are airports all along the coast, so it's not at all like flying to Iceland. What about it?"

"I hate to say no, Reverdy. But I think of all the trouble I shall cause you, how helpless I am——"

"Forget it, Lanny. We have people on board with nothing to do but holystone the decks and polish the brass. As for myself, what have I to do but give my friends pleasure? I will take you into my confidence and say that you are the one who will be doing the favour. Lizbeth says she will come if you do--and you know how much I wish to have her."

"If you put it that way! But I must point out--Lizbeth has never seen me in my present condition, and she may not like it."

"Lizbeth has been told about it, and she says for you to come. Her mother doesn't think it is proper for her to do the inviting——"

But evidently there was a difference of opinion in the Holdenhurst family. No receiver clicked, so Lanny could guess that Lizbeth had been on an extension phone, or that she had taken the receiver from her father's hand. "Nonsense!" came her voice. "Come on, Lanny! We'll have a lovely time."

What could Lanny say but "All right"? Then he added: "When you see this poor wreck you may wish you hadn't spoken!"

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So, he would have to find another job ! And meantime he was free—to rest, to get well, to have a wife if he wanted one ! So there revived the old question : what sort of wife did he want ? Right now it appeared that Laurel Creston had faded into the background ; she was an intellectual, and his mind had gone into a coma. What he wanted was to escape any more pain ; and the thought of Lizbeth's soft arms about him seemed the very height of bliss. He didn't put it in that crude way, and might have resented it if anyone else had done so ; he just drifted along in a sort of half daze. He was exhausted, and didn't want to think ; even the conversation of Cousin Jennie Budd didn't bore him, because she didn't try to make him think. And when he drifted to the island of the Lotus-eaters, it was Lizbeth who sat by his side and held his hand. She would comfort him, treat him like a sick child, help him to learn to walk again.

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Yes, that was the way to look at this cruise. He would have a chance to try out Lizbeth's mind. He would no longer have to conceal from her the fact that he was a Socialist in his sympathies ; not using that alarming word, of course, but leading her gently to a sympathetic understanding of the sufferings of the poor, the indignities of the lowly. After all, she wasn't to blame for her upbringing ; the fact that her mother and father hadn't succeeded in spoiling her was proof of what a sweet and gentle nature had been her endowment. He had never known anything wilful that she had done, unless you counted her determination to love Lanny Budd. And that was something not too difficult for a man to excuse.

XIII

Robbie, shrewd intriguer, had told Cousin Jennie about Lizbeth and the proposed trip. So this maiden lady was full of questions about the heiress : What did she look like and what did she do and say ? Lanny had to tell how he had met her at Emily Chattersworth's villa, and had visited her in Green Spring Valley, and about her home and her parents and the servants and country club and what not. A decorous New England lady would never ask if he had kissed her, but

she could hint gently that Lanny seemed lacking in ardour and wonder secretly if there was some other woman in his life. Cousin Jennie went walking and found a bookstore and brought back travel books about the West Indies and the South Seas, about Bali and Java. She read these aloud to her patient, and sighed at the thought of being able to visit these lands of wonder. The Magic City! The Pearl of the Antilles! The China Seas! The Spice Islands! Lanny, who had been raised on the Côte d'Azur, ought to have understood the device of making up fancy names for the tourist trade, but his critical faculties were less active at this time.

The owner of the *Oriole* called again. "We are ready to leave in three days, Lanny. What do you say?"

"I don't believe the doctors would let me go that soon, Reverdy."

"I renew my suggestion that we wait at Miami. There is an excellent harbour, and plenty to entertain us. Robbie tells me he will arrange to have you flown there. You can wait for good weather, and there are airports all along the coast, so it's not at all like flying to Iceland. What about it?"

"I hate to say no, Reverdy. But I think of all the trouble I shall cause you, how helpless I am——"

"Forget it, Lanny. We have people on board with nothing to do but holystone the decks and polish the brass. As for myself, what have I to do but give my friends pleasure? I will take you into my confidence and say that you are the one who will be doing the favour. Lizbeth says she will come if you do—and you know how much I wish to have her."

"If you put it that way! But I must point out—Lizbeth has never seen me in my present condition, and she may not like it."

"Lizbeth has been told about it, and she says for you to come. Her mother doesn't think it is proper for her to do the inviting——"

But evidently there was a difference of opinion in the Holdenhurst family. No receiver clicked, so Lanny could guess that Lizbeth had been on an extension phone, or that she had taken the receiver from her father's hand. "Nonsense!" came her voice. "Come on, Lanny! We'll have a lovely time."

What could Lanny say but "All right"? Then he added: "When you see this poor wreck you may wish you hadn't spoken!"

BOOK SIX

LIKE GODS TOGETHER, CARELESS
OF MANKIND

21

Pretty Kettle of Fish

I

WITH returning strength Lanny found it easier to write, and this was one way to pass the time. He wrote letters to his clients and his friends, telling them that he was on the way to recovery and where he expected to spend the next few months. Among these persons, naturally, was Laurel Creston, he owed it to her to let her know that he was out of danger, and since he was no longer a P.A., he could write more freely than before. "I have had to give up the duty I had undertaken, and I fear it will be some time before I can take on another. I am obeying the doctors and trying to put all cares out of my mind. I am a burden to myself and to everybody, and it is extraordinarily kind of your uncle to take me on his yacht."

Lanny thought that was putting it tactfully; if a lady fictionist had any tendency to feel slighted, this was letting her know that he was no good to anyone, herself included. He didn't mention Lizbeth, and perhaps Laurel wouldn't know that her cousin was going on the cruise; she could find out, of course, but at least Lanny had indicated that he didn't consider the matter of any importance. He was taking this trip for the sake of his health, lured by the warmth of the tropic seas. "By the time I return," he wrote, "you will be well on with that novel, and I promise to be your first reader." He signed this "Bien-venu," as much as to say that while he was no longer a secret agent he might become one again. It wasn't melodrama to suppose that the chambermaid who cleaned Laurel's room or the janitor who burned her trash might be in the pay of the Nazis.

Reverdy telephoned again. It was the first of November, and the yacht *Oriole* was about to depart from her Baltimore basin. On board would be himself and Lizbeth, his man secretary and her woman tutor—Lizbeth was going to improve her mind, and counted upon Lanny

to help. Also there was the woman doctor, bound for her post in South China, and a Miss Gillis, whom Lanny vaguely remembered as a frail grey-haired lady. All wealthy families have impoverished relatives or school friends of the wife, who perform light duties, such as shopping, helping the social secretary, making up a four at bridge, or looking after a child who has eaten green fruit. "I'll phone you from Miami," added Reverdy. "We'll wait there and go fishing until you arrive."

The doctors said they would be willing to take off the casts in another week, and that seemed to fit the schedule. There was more telephoning, and Robbie undertook to send a two-engine plane with room in the cabin for a single bed. Budd-Erling didn't make such a plane, but Robbie would get it; if you asked how, he would give a sly smile and a wink, and remark: "A lot of people want what I've got, so now and then they have to give me what I want." The father himself didn't come; he was frightfully busy, but would send a man to stay with Lanny from the moment he left the hospital until he was safe on the *Oriole*. Also Robbie would send the promised cheque to the hospital.

II

The breaking off of the plaster was accomplished, and—oh, blessed relief!—Lanny could roll over in bed. He indulged in that luxury for hours, and slept at night as he had not done for weeks. Instead they put on him what they called "short-length braces," made of moulded leather and steel, and extending from his ankle-joints to his knees. Also as an extra precaution, he would use crutches for a few days.

In the morning word came that the plane was at the airport. He wrote a cheque for the faithful Cousin Jennie, who was returning by train. He presented twenty-dollar bills to the nurses, since he couldn't go out and buy them presents. Robbie's man didn't have much to do, because there were so many hospital people eager to help. The patient's journey to the ambulance was a sort of triumphal progress, with everybody lined up to smile and say good-bye. From the ambulance he was carried on a stretcher to the plane and there laid on a bed. Robbie's man sat on a camp chair beside him, and away they went.

The weather was promising, and they were making a flight to Southern Florida, a distance of some eighteen hundred miles. Robbie's injunctions were to break the journey at the Washington airport and spend the night. Lanny might have an ambulance and be taken to a hotel if he wished; but Lanny said there was no sense in that, his supper could be brought to the plane and he could sleep right there. He was cheerfully interested in the first careful tentatives at lifting his

legs. His escort was an employee of the Budd-Erling plant; he was interested in talking about it, and Lanny in listening. They passed the evening, and at dawn were off on the second leg of the journey.

An ambulance was waiting at the Miami airport, and the traveller was driven to a pier where the elegant 212-foot yacht had been laid alongside especially for this event. From first to last Lanny never had a moment's discomfort; that is the way the rich are treated in this world, provided they have the sense to stay within their own sacred circle and not go wandering off on secret arctic missions with false passports. Reverdy Johnson Holdenhurst never did anything like that, but took care of himself and his family and friends if they would let him. Reverdy declared that the legend, "three generations from shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves," was true only of the wastrels and fools; it certainly wasn't true of those who had the sense to put their money into city real estate, like the Astors and Vanderbilts and Rockefellers -- and the Holdenhursts of the Monumental City.

There were yachts and speedboats in this ample harbour, a winter playground of the rich. But many of them were no longer "private"; they had been turned over to the Coast Guard to be used for patrol and escort duty in a public emergency. Some had been equipped with guns, and others were doing the best they could with small arms. There were persons who thought the *Oriole* ought to be in this service; they had annoyed Reverdy with their suggestions, and he saw that they didn't get a second chance. His privacy, and the state of his health, were matters which he considered his first concern, and now he was anxious to get away from American waters before some damnable bureaucrat took it into his head to say that it was not permissible for a pleasure yacht to cruise in the Pacific.

III

All the passengers and some of the crew were lined along the rail when the ambulance came out on the pier. The invalid was transferred to a surgical cart, one of those little beds on rubber-tired wheels which are used in hospitals to carry patients to and from operations. A convenient thing to have on board, Reverdy said, and he'd have got it sooner if he had thought. Lanny might sleep on it all the time if he wished; but Lanny said no, he was soon going to be walking. To show how smart he was, when the vehicle reached the deck of the yacht he sat up so as to shake hands with the friends who gathered about.

He was happy as a bird let out of a cage. Such a wonderful thing, to be able to look around you, and to feel sunshine on your face and hands! He was pale from six weeks' confinement, but the sun would

soon fix that, he could feel the process already under way. Imagine feeling the cold of the subarctic one day, and the caressing warmth of the subtropics the next! Everybody here was in white ducks or flannels, and Lanny had not failed to be provided with a summer outfit in Halifax.

Here came Lizbeth; and how pretty she looked in a yachting costume! It had been so that Lanny had first seen her in the *Golfe Juan*—and be sure it was perfectly tailored, also perfectly laundered by the man who was on the yacht to perform that special service. The softest light French flannel, cream-coloured with blue trimmings; and to go with this, lovely cheeks that didn't need retouching, and soft brown hair that had received exactly the right kind of permanent. Lizbeth was blushing with happiness like a June bride, and possibly she thought of herself that way. She had never looked sweeter. Lanny decided that he had made a wise decision, and that this trip was going to be one of unblemished delight.

Until the owner of the yacht, after telling about the golf game he had played and the fish he had caught, remarked casually: "We won't sail until morning, because we have another passenger coming on the night train from New York: my niece, Laurel Creston."

Just so casually does a thunderbolt fall from the sky, or a parachute bomb explode after drifting down from a plane! Fortunately, a man who has been trained to be a diplomat in boyhood and who has been a secret agent for years learns not to let consternation show in his face. As it happened, Lanny had discussed with Laurel how they would both behave if and when fate brought them together in the presence of "Uncle Reverdy." After one gulp, Lanny was able to remark: "Laurel Creston? Isn't she a writer?"

"Yes," replied the other. "She has had a number of stories in magazines. One that I read I thought quite good. She telephoned that she was planning to start work on a novel, and thought that a cruise would give her the necessary quiet. So I told her to come."

"It sounds very interesting," was Lanny's casual comment.

IV

Later on he had time to think this development over, and he decided that it was a consequence of his recent letter to Laurel. The moment she had received it, she had telephoned to her uncle, asking if she would be welcome. That was clear enough; but why had she done it? It might be that she valued Lanny's knowledge of Germany, and wanted to have him available while she wrote. That was conceivable; but staring at Lanny like the face of a jack-o'-lantern in

the dark was the other possibility, that Laurel had made up her mind all of a sudden not to let Lizbeth have him to herself over a period of six months and perhaps for life !

Inner voices told him that that was the real reason, and no use fooling himself. His letter had told Laurel that he had given up the dangerous mission abroad, which was practically saying that he was free to think about love and marriage. All women are psychologists—they have had to be in order to survive through the ages—and especially is that true of one who hopes to survive as a writer of fiction for other women. The nurses at the hospital had known that a man lying helpless in bed is a shining mark for sympathetic attention; and surely the woman whose mind had created "The Gauleiter's Cousin" would be no less acute ! Now "Mary Morrow" was on the train from New York, with a suitcase full of manuscripts and a couple of steamer trunks full of clothes, and in her mind the set purpose of cutting out her cousin Lizbeth and carrying off the living prize in a contest of charm !

It may have seemed egotistical of Lanny Budd's subconscious mind to be so sure; but then, a presidential agent has to be something of a psychologist too, and this one had been watching women ever since he could remember in the nursery. If there was anything unfavourable about them that his mother hadn't told him, it had been supplied by Emily and Sophie and Margy, by Rosemary and Irma and Marceline and Marie de Bruyne. In addition to these living authorities, there was *Man and Superman*, which Lanny had read and chuckled over. Yes, surely; when a woman encounters the right man for her biological purposes she goes after him. She may be ever so haughty in spirit, she may have been taught an ever-so-stiff decorum in a city whose ruling group has always been Southern and has refused to be "reconstructed." But when she meets the right man she starts spinning webs like a spider, and all other women of the eligible age become her enemies *pro tem*.

So this invalid lying on a pallet with rubber-tired wheels suddenly saw the cruise of the *Oriole* in an entirely new light; no longer as a sojourn in the land of the Lotus-eaters, but as a biological battleground, a jousting tournament, a duello—many such similes came to his mind. In the end he settled upon an old Scotch phrase, and the trim white shining *Oriole* became "a pretty kettle of fish !"

v

Lanny wasn't on deck when Laurel's taxi brought her to the pier. He did not meet her until next morning, when he was wheeled out

into the sunshine, clad in a fresh white duck outfit. The yacht was gliding down the Miami River and out into Biscayne Bay. There was Laurel with her uncle, he in his proper yachtsman's costume and she in a light blue summer dress. "Laurel," said the skipper, "this is my friend Lanny Budd." And then to Lanny: "This is my niece, Laurel Creston." Ladies first, always.

Both of them had studied their roles. Laurel said: "I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Budd. I have heard about you." Lanny said: "I think I have seen your work in a magazine. I am honoured." Very formal, very proper—but in their secret hearts quite a tumult. Laurel would be thinking: "Will he forgive me?" Lanny was thinking: "Dare I give her a wink?"

An odd sort of intrigue, seeming-guilty yet in fact innocent. A P.A. had begun it, because he hadn't dared reveal to anyone that he had helped a woman wanted by the Gestapo to escape from Germany. Laurel had acceded to it, because she hadn't wanted her uncle to know that she had been accumulating "Red" literature in her trunk in Berlin, and had given help to the anti-Nazi underground. She and Lanny had thought it easy enough never to mention their meetings in Germany; but this simple bit of concealment had grown by accretion, until now there were large chunks of their lives which they must never refer to. Laurel might say that she had visited the French Riviera, but never that she had been a guest of Lanny's mother. And nothing about those delightful motor rides in and near New York; nor about her mediumship, because if she did the guests would want to attend séances, and who could guess what Otto Kahn might say about past events? Whole chunks cut out of their lives! And they must always be on formal terms, always "Mister" and "Miss," at least until they had been on the yacht for some time.

Here came Lizbeth, dressed in her prettiest, and ready to give her full attention to the invalid; so it was up to Laurel to take herself tactfully out of the way, to get a book and become absorbed in it. Day and night, Lizbeth would be there, and watching like a hawk; a female hawk, which presumably has no less keen vision than her partner, and may have the double duty of keeping watch to make certain that the partner is not paying visits to any other lady hawk's perch. From the first hour it was made plain to Lanny Budd that he was Lizbeth's guest, almost her property; it was to her that he was expected to pay attention, and for any of the other females on board to divert him from this duty would be presumption, not to say treason. It simply wasn't done on board yachts, and all persons of refinement and discretion would understand it.

Lanny never ceased to wonder just how the presence of the cousin had been allowed to come about. Had Reverdy been trapped into it

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by a sudden telephone call? Had Laurel planned it that way, to get his consent before he had time to realize what he was doing? Or had he, manlike, failed to consider the possibility that Laurel might develop into a rival for Lanny's attention? Could it be that this solitary and easily bored man had thought of Laurel as a source of entertainment for himself? Somebody to talk to, and tell him stories, and play bridge with him? He, the conservative and old-fashioned Southerner, would surely not have read *Man and Superman*, and it might never have occurred to him that a lady of his family would be capable of trying to run off with her hostess's intended. And especially no woman who had reached the age of thirty-four or thereabouts, which in the Old South meant that she was hopelessly committed to spinsterhood, and that any sign of marital aspirations would be the occasion for gales of ridicule from all the other members of her family.

VI

So here was this invalid passenger, caught in the oddest of domestic triangles; he called it "the three L's"—Lanny, Lizbeth, and Laurel. The French had a name for it, *la vie à trois*; Lanny had been in it once before, in the Château de Bruyne, and then it had been less innocent but far more entertaining. In the present case he found that he had become a prisoner of love. Lizbeth was so sweet and so seemingly guileless that he would be unwilling to hurt her feelings, and would behave as she took it for granted that he must and would.

It wasn't so bad at the beginning. He had to get his strength back, and she was so happy to help. Food was important, and at meal-times they wheeled him into the dining-saloon for company's sake, a tray was put in his lap, and everybody took an interest in making sure that he got everything he wanted. Later, after he had made certain that he could stand up with his braces and that they would support his weight, a man-servant helped him to a seat and he could dine like the others. He had to do a lot of sleeping, so Lizbeth made no objection when he retired to his cabin, and if he stole part of his time there to read a book, she didn't know it.

What she expected was his social time. She wanted to be nurse and mother, little sister and companion. She wanted to watch him learning to get about with his crutches, and after a few days, to guide his experiments at standing and walking alone. She wanted to feel that she was useful to him, and that his success was her reward. When at last he was able to pace the deck, she wanted to hold his arm and pretend that she was aiding him. They stopped to lean on the railing and look over the dark blue waters of the Caribbean Sea. Flying fish

rose from the ship's path and scudded away close to the surface; she wanted to be the one to hear him explain that this was their way of escaping from pursuers. What a strange thing to think of, the infinitude of life in that sea, each fantastic kind preying upon the others to the best of its powers; a whole universe of cruelty without a single moral sentiment that any mind could detect!

So Lanny philosophized, and apparently Lizbeth had never heard anything of that nature. They stood at the yacht's bow, watching the porpoises diving and swinging this way and that in the water. He told her that this was play, and that the play spirit was all through nature; it was practice for living, an overflow of energy. He told her that these creatures were not fish, but mammals, which suckled their young; that seemed to her slightly shocking, but it was natural history, and doubtless that made it modest. He told her about this sea water, that it was full of all kinds of minerals, and on the coast of Texas a huge plant was being built for the extracting of magnesium from the Gulf of Mexico. She decided all over again that he was the most widely informed man she had ever known, and altogether wonderful.

It was the same when he turned the dials of the radio, which perforce took the place of newspapers on this cruise. She would have preferred the latest jazz tunes, and, as he grew stronger, to dance with him; but he wanted to listen to news about battles in the snows of Russia, and she sat by and tried to be attentive. Lanny appeared to take an aloof attitude to the struggle; it didn't make much difference who won, so she wondered why he cared to hear so many bloody details. The Germans were in the very suburbs of Moscow, and everybody seemed to think they were going to get all the way in; but suddenly they began to retreat, and then it was dreadful, because there was deep snow and bitter cold, and how anybody could live there was a mystery. How glad Lizbeth was that they were in this safe and warm place!

Secretly she consulted the globe which stood in the yacht's library, and found European Russia, and there was Moscow near the middle of it. She really wanted to understand these matters and be able to open her lips without making some "boner." She was familiar with her father's opinion, that the Communists were the greatest menace that had ever appeared in the world, and that anybody who was trying to put them down should have American sympathy. But apparently Lanny looked at it as an art expert; he remarked casually that Europe had always had wars, and one more didn't matter much.

Others would listen to these broadcasts, and generally Laurel was among them. She would sit with her lips tight, never discussing any political subject; and on that very account Lizbeth suspected her of

by a sudden telephone call? Had Laurel planned it that way, to get his consent before he had time to realize what he was doing? Or had he, manlike, failed to consider the possibility that Laurel might develop into a rival for Lanny's attention? Could it be that this solitary and easily bored man had thought of Laurel as a source of entertainment for himself? Somebody to talk to, and tell him stories, and play bridge with him? He, the conservative and old-fashioned Southerner, would surely not have read *Man and Superman*, and it might never have occurred to him that a lady of his family would be capable of trying to run off with her hostess's intended. And especially no woman who had reached the age of thirty-four or thereabouts, which in the Old South meant that she was hopelessly committed to spinsterhood, and that any sign of marital aspirations would be the occasion for gales of ridicule from all the other members of her family.

So here was this invalid passenger, caught in the oddest of domestic triangles; he called it "the three L's"—Lanny, Lizbeth, and Laurel. The French had a name for it, *la vie à trois*; Lanny had been in it once before, in the Château de Bruyne, and then it had been less innocent but far more entertaining. In the present case he found that he had become a prisoner of love. Lizbeth was so sweet and so seemingly guileless that he would be unwilling to hurt her feelings, and would behave as she took it for granted that he must and would.

It wasn't so bad at the beginning. He had to get his strength back, and she was so happy to help. Food was important, and at meal times they wheeled him into the dining-saloon for company's sake. a tray was put in his lap, and everybody took an interest in making sure that he got everything he wanted. Later, after he had made certain that he could stand up with his braces and that they would support his weight, a man-servant helped him to a seat and he could dine like the others. He had to do a lot of sleeping, so Lizbeth made no objection when he retired to his cabin, and if he stole part of his time there to read a book, she didn't know it.

What she expected was his social time. She wanted to be nurse and mother, little sister and companion. She wanted to watch him learning to get about with his crutches, and after a few days, to guide his experiments at standing and walking alone. She wanted to feel that she was useful to him, and that his success was her reward. When at last he was able to pace the deck, she wanted to hold his arm and pretend that she was aiding him. They stopped to lean on the railing and look over the dark blue waters of the Caribbean Sea. Flying fish

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Others would listen to these broadcasts, and generally Laurel was among them. She would sit with her lips tight, never discussing any political subject; and on that very account Lizbeth suspected her of

unorthodox thoughts. Laurel had left the family nest and gone off to New York; Laurel wrote things which she apparently didn't care to show her relatives; she made remarks which were supposed to be witty, and then Lanny would laugh and Lizbeth would feel uneasy. More and more in her secret heart she was coming to distrust this cousin, and to wonder why her father had let her come. But of course she had to be polite.

VII

The southward course of the yacht took them past the Bahamas and between Cuba and Haiti; but they did not stop to see any of the sights of these places. Reverdy explained: "Althea is overdue at her post, so we plan to take her to China, and then loaf on the way home." He added to Lanny: "If that is agreeable." Of course Lanny said it was entirely agreeable.

Althea was the medical missionary, and Lanny asked what port was her destination. The answer was: "Hong-Kong." The name, like the sound of a bell, rang with that effect in Lanny's mind. For something over three years the name had had a special meaning to him. In Munich at the time of the settlement between Chamberlain and Hitler, Lanny had happened to make the acquaintance of a young Rumanian who called himself an astrologer and had been honoured by the Nazis in their peculiar way—which was to arrest him, shut him up in an elegant suite in the Vier Jahreszeiten Hotel, feed him on the fat of the land, and order him to prepare horoscopes of the Führer and his entourage.

Lanny didn't have the slightest belief in astrology, so he hadn't been worried when this mystical personage had taken his hand, gazed into his eyes, and declared: "You will die in Hong-Kong within three or four years." Lanny had argued that he hadn't any interest in Hong-Kong, or reason for going there, to which Herr Reminescu had responded firmly: "You will go." Naturally it gave Lanny something of a jolt to be told now that he was going. He was especially attentive to the subject of precognition because of what had happened in the North Atlantic. He had disregarded one warning and wished he hadn't; and could it be now that he was going from one doom to another? Could it be that he had provoked the fates by escaping, and that they were on his trail? Or was it all *one* doom? Certainly it was true that if he hadn't met with the accident in the North Atlantic he would never have been on the way to South China.

He didn't say anything about the matter to Reverdy, because this was a pleasure trip, and talk about dooms and deaths was hardly in

order. The only person on board to whom he had told the story was Laurel, and he didn't know if she would remember it; some time he might ask her—if ever he had a chance for conversation alone with her. That didn't seem likely, as matters were shaping up, for everybody on the *Oriole*, even the servants and the crew, appeared to take it for granted that the one person with whom Lanny was ever to be alone was the owner's daughter. They were so pointed about it, they withdrew so obviously, that it became embarrassing; the only way to keep a group together was to play cards or turn on the radio. The polite and well-bred cousin apparently fell in with this custom; she never favoured Lanny with so much as a wink or a private smile. In his mind he kept asking her: "If that's the way you are going to act, why on earth did you come?"

They approached Panama, and a plane high overhead must have radioed the news, for an armed speedboat met them before they were in sight of land. Their papers were inspected and instructions given, for this was one of the most carefully guarded pieces of property on earth. If an enemy could knock it out, the American fleet would be cut into two halves, and neither half would be big enough for any military purpose. The Army now took charge of all vessels entering the Canal, and passengers and crew had to be below decks while the vessel was being towed through the locks. The passengers might come out and have a look at Gatun Lake, but that was just one more tropical lake with jungle-covered hills around it. The day happened to be hot, and the cabins were air cooled, so stay in them and read a book—or have your hair dressed if you were a lady.

In the town of Panama they stopped for a load of Diesel oil, and the passengers, excepting Lanny, went ashore and were driven about to look at four-hundred-year-old ruins. Reverdy said it was one of the few ports at which it would be safe to stay ashore after sundown, because the Army had got rid of the mosquitoes. Reverdy's mind was full of odds and ends of facts, and he pointed out the strange one that the Atlantic end of this canal was farther west than its Pacific end. Also, he said that the level of the western ocean was nine inches higher than the eastern, an effect of the earth's eastward revolution. Items of information like that were one's reward for travelling around the earth once a year.

The travellers bought picture postcards and wrote messages to their friends at home. They sat in a night club—there were scores of them—and listened to a "spigotty" band playing the same hit tunes

they had been getting over the radio, all the way from Baltimore south. The dancing was the same as you would see in the night spots of American cities, for nowadays the merchants of entertainment were combing Mexico and Cuba and points south for forms of sensuality to stir the jaded tastes of their patrons. The guests of the *Oriole* came back early and assured their invalid that he hadn't missed much.

There was a ten-thousand-mile journey before them, and they would take it pretty nearly straight, except for refuelling and the restocking of their larder. The yacht had a cruising speed of nearly twenty knots, which was unusual—but then Reverdy was an unusual man, who wanted what he wanted, and had had it made exactly to his order. Their round trip would be about equal to circumnavigating the globe at its equator. In earlier years, Reverdy had gone all the way around, and that was how he had come to show up at Cannes. But now he had to make what he called "a dog's journey," there and back, and he hated the war for causing this inconvenience. Reverdy would have liked to see a part of the earth set apart as a duelling ground, where nations that wanted to fight could go and have it out, and leave the high seas to American millionaires in search of health and recreation.

IX

The guests settled down to an agreeable routine. Every morning Lizbeth studied with her tutor, that same middle-aged teacher of art whom she had employed in Baltimore. Since the pupil was a sociable soul they studied on the quarter-deck, under an ample awning, and with a steward bringing them iced fruit juices now and then. They studied different subjects at different hours, just as in school, and if at any time Lanny cared to join them it would be lovely; Miss Hayman would fall silent and let Mr. Budd do the talking, since obviously he knew so much more about everything.

Thus a prospective fiancé had opportunity to investigate the mind of his almost-intended, and he observed that it was a literal mind: education consisted of storing up a set of facts, to be used later in cultured conversation. A young lady acquired "accomplishments," and after she had got herself a husband she never used them and quickly forgot all but a few phrases. Lizbeth was supposed to have acquired a full quota before her debut, but she had picked an especially fastidious man and now was labouring to come up to his requirements. It seemed to the man pathetic in the extreme, and he would have liked to say: "My dear, that isn't the way to do it!" She would have countered: "What *is* the way?"—and what could he have told her?

Laurel had her coffee and toast brought to her cabin, and seldom appeared before lunchtime. She had a typewriter, and if you passed her door you would hear it clicking busily. Lanny would wonder. Was this another story about the Pension Baumgartner in Berlin? Or was it the beginning of the novel? Or might it by any chance be a sketch of life on board a pleasure yacht? This last ought to go well with any magazine editor. Lanny thought of titles: *South Sea Idyll*, *Lotus Landing*; *Caribbean Courtship*. All by "Mary Morrow," of course!

At mealtime, and when she was in company with the others, Laurel's manner was one of careful courtesy. She made no effort to shine in conversation, and displayed none of that sharp wit by which Lanny had come to know her in the beginning. She appeared to have no special interest in "Mr. Budd," and rarely looked in his direction. She deferred in all things to her uncle, and if her opinion was asked on any subject having to do with politics or international affairs, she would say: "Uncle Reverdy knows so much more about these matters than I do." On that basis, anybody could get along on a private yacht!

Dr. Althea Carroll was somewhere in her late twenties, Lanny guessed—that was as near as any gentleman would come. She had a round, rather pale face and wore spectacles; her disposition was serious. It was explained that her mother had been a schoolmate of Mrs. Holdenhurst and they had kept up the friendship. Her father was a physician in the interior of China, and Althea had studied, first at Johns Hopkins University and then at the Medical School to fit herself as her father's assistant. She was a devout Episcopalian, and reported that her church was far too worldly and too little interested in missionary work; she loved the Chinese people, and meant to do what she could to help both their bodies and their souls. She had a supply of medical books and magazines which she read whenever it was permissible.

She was extremely careful never to be alone with the genial Mr. Budd, and Lanny had no conversation with her except when Lizbeth was present. There was a special reason for this, which he found out before long; the money for the support of the mission came in part from Lizbeth's mother, and Althea owed her education to this charitable lady; therefore Lizbeth's lightest desire was the woman doctor's law, and she was careful to give no offence to anyone. The care of Lanny's health had been assigned her as a duty, but she did not offer to make any examination, and the advice she gave was in Lizbeth's presence, and with Lizbeth as intermediary. "You must see that he doesn't walk too far and that he rests in between walks."

Lanny observed with special interest the habits of the owner of this floating winter resort. The wireless operator brought him market reports every day, and Reverdy studied these; he had elaborate charts which showed the movement of stock values over long periods, and apparently he never got tired of keeping these up-to-date. If he ever sent any orders, Lanny didn't know it; perhaps he made imaginary investments, a purely intellectual exercise like a game of chess. He took his duties as skipper conscientiously, and every morning made a tour of the yacht, accompanied by the master; he pried into every corner, including the refrigerators and storerooms, the kitchen, the engine-room, the chart-room; he gave orders for the menus of both guests and crew, the course for the day, and many other details.

Those duties done, he sat in a steamer chair on deck and read a mystery story, a "Whodunit." There was a murder, and you were kept guessing until the last moment, and then were surprised to discover that some innocent-looking person was a dangerous criminal. Lanny had sampled a few, and had made note that the murdered man or woman was always a person of wealth and social importance; the purpose of the criminal was to get hold of some property—a jewel, a chest of gold, a will, or whatever it might be. There was a detective who spent his life solving such mysteries, and the reader put himself in this brilliant person's place and thrilled with every step of his progress toward a solution.

The world of the "Whodunits" was a world absorbed in property, the getting of it and protecting of it. The writing and publishing of such stories was a department of business; it, too, was a way of getting and keeping property, with the help of the copyright laws. Lanny thought he had seldom met a man so absorbed in property as Reverdy Holdenhurst, and it was easy to see why he was fascinated by the idea of crime. Did he put himself in the place of the murdered man, and imagine somebody murdering him, and wonder who it might be? The innocent-looking Lanny surely didn't want to be the one, so he was careful not to ask questions about how the cruise of the *Oriole* was financed; whether there was gold in the safe in the owner's cabin, or whether it was done by express cheques, or by credit established in places where the yacht had been putting in for many years.

In the afternoon there was a siesta period, advisable in tropic climes; then came iced drinks, and they played cards on deck unless the breeze was too strong. This activity likewise had to do with property, and was a source of wonder as well as of boredom to Lanny. That people who owned millions of dollars should be trying to win

another's pennies had always seemed to him slightly fantastic; but they did it, everywhere in the leisure-class world. They were so completely dominated by the motive of money-making that when they had exhausted themselves in the battles of reality they invented play forms of the same thing. Reverdy kept the score, and there was always a settlement at the end; he found satisfaction in winning a dollar or two from a guest while spending one or two hundred dollars a day entertaining him. A mad world, my masters!

XI

Reverdy showed Lanny their route on the globe. It would have been pleasanter to travel by way of Hawaii and westward along the line of the temperate zone, but the distances between ports were too great for a yacht's fuel capacity. Farther to the south, just north of the equator, was a belt some three thousand miles long which had been mandated to the Japanese; they were under pledge not to fortify it, but everybody knew they had done so, and they made matters extremely unpleasant for visitors. Thus the only practicable route lay south of the equator, dotted with groups of islands under British, French, or American control. The weather would be hot, but Reverdy had come for that; those who didn't enjoy it could stay in the air-conditioned interior until the sun had gone down.

They passed the Galapagos Islands, but not near enough to see them. Reverdy had been there, and reported that they were disappointing; their surface consisted for the most part of volcanic lava, with edges so sharp that they cut your shoes. The giant tortoises were almost extinct, and it was against the laws of Ecuador to take them. There was some fertile land in small valleys, and settlers had tried to live there; cattle and donkeys, pigs and dogs had escaped, and now formed a wild fauna, extremely unpleasant and sometimes dangerous. Reverdy had accumulated a set of scrapbooks about all the places he had visited, and he read aloud to the company a magazine article about a couple of back-to-nature enthusiasts who had tried to establish themselves in a fertile glen, and of their futile struggle to fence out the fierce invaders. The man in this episode was a German scientist, embittered against humanity; one of his measures in preparation for the simple life was to have all his teeth out and a stainless steel set made. Lanny thought that an odd way of getting back to Nature.

Steadily the trim white *Oriole* ploughed her way through these vast and lonely waters. Her course lay straight into the sunset, and every evening when the great golden ball dropped into the sea it was some-

thing like a half hour later—which meant that the yacht had covered between four and five hundred miles. This seeming-easy progress would continue for a matter of three weeks, not counting the time off for stops. Lanny's birthday came, his forty-first, and they celebrated it with an elaborate cake and a special bottle of champagne. He proposed a toast—to victory and peace before the *Oriole's* return.

Each day the invalid practised walking, at first unsteadily, then with returning strength. By advice of the doctors, including the young lady on board, he took many short walks, and little by little made them longer. And with this physical recuperation came activity of mind; Lanny Budd was able to stop brooding over atomic formulas and the months he had wasted in learning them. He wasn't at all sure that Alston had been telling him the truth about the information from Germany; but Lanny knew that he had done his best, and that sooner or later he would find some new way to help in the war against Nazi-Fascism. Meantime, whenever he turned on the radio, he wondered if he was going to hear that New York had been destroyed by an atomic bomb. Or would it be Berlin? He could not speak one word on the subject.

The yacht would never be out of reach of short-wave radio during the cruise; the passengers learned that the Russians were holding out, and apparently were going on fighting through the winter. That meant more time for America to produce supplies and find ways to get them to both Russia and Britain. Lanny would pick up scraps of news here and there and put them together and form conclusions which he was careful not to express. Reverdy told his guests what to think about the wickedness of Bolshevism, and he would have been greatly upset if he had had the idea that he had a "radical" or anything of that sort on board. He wanted Britain to win without having the Soviet Union win, and how to arrange this was a problem that Lanny passed on to him.

XII

The affair between the invalid and the owner's daughter continued to develop, and those on board watched it with increasing interest. A "romance" was their name for it, and they proved the saying that all the world loves a lover. All the world of the *Oriole* stood aside for a pair of lovers, and made things easy for them. It was taken for granted that when Lanny walked, Lizbeth should walk with him; that when he read, he should read aloud to her; that when he played bridge, she should be his partner. It was exactly like being married except that now when he went to his cabin he could be alone, whereas

when the knot was tied he would be expected to go to her cabin and stay there.

At first, when he was weak and sick, this idea of "steady company" was pleasant enough; but the painful fact was that every day as his strength returned it became less so. Lizbeth could meet his bodily needs, but she could not meet those of his mind; and the more his mind became active, the less tolerable he found it not to be alone. What on earth was he to talk to her about? Hear her recite lessons, and supplement the efforts of her tutor? When he had met her in Baltimore there had been many people, and she had chatted happily about what they had said and done. But on the yacht nothing happened, and one day was the same as the next. Pretty soon she had told him everything she knew about everybody on board, and after that the only alternatives were to play shuffleboard or bridge, or try to get some jazz music on the radio and dance in solemn languor.

He knew only too well what she wanted, which was for him to make love to her. There was a splendid tropic moon and a soft warm breeze and the sound of the yacht's prow splashing the water. Late at night, instead of going off to his cabin, he ought to sit and hold her hand, and then put his arm about her. Little by little she would yield in perfect bliss; they would murmur sweet nothings, and her heart would begin to pound and the blushes mount to her cheeks. Presently she would tell her father, and he would tell the others, that at last they were engaged. At the next port, they would go ashore and find some missionary, or the "resident," or whatever the governor of a Polynesian island was called, to make them man and wife; and after that Lanny would live the rest of his days as he was living now, doing what was expected of him, and bored beyond endurance.

Many times he had thought that he might "educate her" to his way of thinking; but now that he faced the prospect of beginning, he saw that he didn't know how. His first words would have to be: "You must promise me not to say a word to your father about what I am going to tell you." And what would that mean to Lizbeth's mind? She adored her father, and had probably never once thought of the possibility that he might be wrong. Lanny was proposing to reveal to her a set of political and social ideas which would be utterly beyond her understanding, and which she had been taught by both her mother and father were wicked, not to say sacrilegious. It could only throw her mind into a turmoil, and make her think that her adored Lanny Budd was some new sort of wolf in sheep's clothing—a Pink wolf, or even a Red one, something more terrible than had ever been known in the folklore of any people.

Well, that might be one way to break off with her; a painful way, but Lanny couldn't think of any way that was going to be pleasant.

Lizbeth was leaning more and more toward him every day, and she was bound to be wondering why his arms were not held out to her. The tension was increasing; and how many more times would he bid her good night before she would catch at his hand, or have tears running down her cheeks—or worse yet, before she would start weeping in her father's presence, and force Reverdy to come to the reluctant lover and ask him what was the matter? Lanny thought: I am in a *mesa*, and I ought to remind Reverdy of our bargain, and get off at the first place where I can get a plane back to the States.

XIII

But that wasn't altogether satisfactory either, for he became aware that what he really wanted was to talk to Laurel Creston. Day by day as his bodily needs decreased and his mental needs increased, Laurel took the place of Lizbeth in his thoughts. He wasn't in the slightest doubt as to what he wanted to talk to Laurel about, and there was little possibility that they would run out of subjects. He could say to her what he really thought, and without any preliminary education to make certain that it didn't shock her. What a preposterous situation, that they had to pretend to be strangers, and could not take any steps to become friends! And this was supposed to continue for six months, without any chance of alteration.

Again and again he went over the problem in his mind. Had she come because of a sudden impulse? Or had it really been true that she wanted to concentrate upon a novel? Was it that she didn't care anything about Lanny Budd, except as a source of information about Germany? If this last was her motive, she was certainly being thwarted; and how long would she submit to that? Another possibility—could it be that she thought Lanny was really in love with Lizbeth, and that she was loyally keeping out of the way? Or was she waiting to let him make up his mind and give some sign as to his choice? If that was the case, what would she be thinking about him? Nothing very good, Lanny could guess. Probably that he was marrying a yacht and an estate in Green Spring Valley!

He had never given Laurel the least hint that he was interested in her cousin, or she in him. So it was possible that Laurel had come on board in ignorance of the situation existing. But, on the other hand, she might have got the facts from some member of the family, or some friend; she might have come for the studied purpose of confronting Lanny with the intellectual life, of letting him see the superiority of mind over matter, of brains over beauty. It all depended upon whether she really wanted him for herself. She had never let him

know; and all he could say was that if she did want him, she was taking a large chance by her present aloofness!

All this turmoil was to be charged up against the tiresome and persistent subject of sex, which wouldn't let either men or women rest and kept upsetting all their plans and pleasures. All that Lanny wanted, he told himself, was to enjoy intellectual conversation with a woman writer; he wanted to know what was emerging from the rattle of typewriter keys in her cabin every morning. He wanted to give her such help as his well-stored mind could supply. But he couldn't do it, because—to put it in plain language—a young female at the age for motherhood wanted him to be the father of her children.

That was a proper purpose, of course; it was the way Nature's programme was carried on. And maybe Nature was wiser than any of her creatures. Lanny could wonder whether, in that spirit world about which he had done so much imagining, there might be unborn souls floating about restlessly, seeking opportunity to enter into life. A strange field for speculation, indeed! Did those souls—or minds, or egos, or personalities, or whatever name you chose to give them—exist now? Or did they only begin to exist after a missionary or resident or governor had pronounced a formula and made an entry into a register, thus officially authorizing a male sperm to make contact with a female ovum? If it was true, as many philosophers insisted and as the physicists were now agreeing, that time was a form of human thought, then the souls that were going to exist must exist now. Were they conscious of their destiny; did they know where they were coming?

And one more curious idea: when a man was trying to make up his mind whether to marry or not, did the souls know about the problem? If so, Lanny Budd must be causing considerable confusion in that shadowy vestibule. It might even be that there were two sets of souls—the Lanny-Lizbeth set and the Lanny-Laurel set, hovering at the gates of being. And would they fight one another for precedence? And could that have anything to do with the emotions that were now agitating the bosoms of two ladies on earth, or that would be agitating them before this duel of the three L's had been fought to a finish?

Another aspect of this "life in threes" was frequently in Lanny's thoughts; he was interested in psychic research, a subject that had nothing to do with sex. Laurel was a medium, and just now Lanny had a problem he was longing to investigate. This business of his going to Hong-Kong and what was going to happen there! Even apart from any question of his personal concern, he would have liked to try a few séances. What would Otto Kahn have to say about the matter? And would Great-Uncle Eli come, or Zaharoff or Marcel

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XIII

But that wasn't altogether satisfactory either, for he became aware that what he really wanted was to talk to Laurel Creston. Day by day as his bodily needs decreased and his mental needs increased, Laurel took the place of Lizbeth in his thoughts. He wasn't in the slightest doubt as to what he wanted to talk to Laurel about, and there was little possibility that they would run out of subjects. He could say to her what he really thought, and without any preliminary education to make certain that it didn't shock her. What a preposterous situation, that they had to pretend to be strangers, and could not take any steps to become friends! And this was supposed to continue for six months, without any chance of alteration.

Again and again he went over the problem in his mind. Had she come because of a sudden impulse? Or had it really been true that she wanted to concentrate upon a novel? Was it that she didn't care anything about Lanny Budd, except as a source of information about Germany? If this last was her motive, she was certainly being thwarted; and how long would she submit to that? Another possibility—could it be that she thought Lanny was really in love with Lizbeth, and that she was loyally keeping out of the way? Or was she waiting to let him make up his mind and give some sign as to his choice? If that was the case, what would she be thinking about him? Nothing very good, Lanny could guess. Probably that he was marrying a yacht and an estate in Green Spring Valley!

He had never given Laurel the least hint that he was interested in her cousin, or she in him. So it was possible that Laurel had come on board in ignorance of the situation existing. But, on the other hand, she might have got the facts from some member of the family, or some friend; she might have come for the studied purpose of confronting Lanny with the intellectual life, of letting him see the superiority of mind over matter, of brains over beauty. It all depended upon whether she really wanted him for herself. She had never let him

know; and all he could say was that if she did want him, she was taking a large chance by her present aloofness!

All this turmoil was to be charged up against the tiresome and persistent subject of sex, which wouldn't let either men or women rest and kept upsetting all their plans and pleasures. All that Lanny wanted, he told himself, was to enjoy intellectual conversation with a woman writer: he wanted to know what was emerging from the rattle of typewriter keys in her cabin every morning. He wanted to give her such help as his well-stored mind could supply. But he couldn't do it, because—to put it in plain language—a young female at the age for motherhood wanted him to be the father of her children.

That was a proper purpose, of course; it was the way Nature's programme was carried on. And maybe Nature was wiser than any of her creatures. Lanny could wonder whether, in that spirit world about which he had done so much imagining, there might be unborn souls floating about restlessly, seeking opportunity to enter into life. A strange field for speculation, indeed! Did those souls—or minds, or egos, or personalities, or whatever name you chose to give them—exist now? Or did they only begin to exist after a missionary or resident or governor had pronounced a formula and made an entry into a register, thus officially authorizing a male sperm to make contact with a female ovum? If it was true, as many philosophers insisted and as the physicists were now agreeing, that time was a form of human thought, then the souls that were going to exist must exist now. Were they conscious of their destiny; did they know where they were coming?

And one more curious idea: when a man was trying to make up his mind whether to marry or not, did the souls know about the problem? If so, Lanny Budd must be causing considerable confusion in that shadowy vestibule. It might even be that there were two sets of souls—the Lanny-Lizbeth set and the Lanny-Laurel set, hovering at the gates of being. And would they fight one another for precedence? And could that have anything to do with the emotions that were now agitating the bosoms of two ladies on earth, or that would be agitating them before this duel of the three L's had been fought to a finish?

Another aspect of this "life in threes" was frequently in Lanny's thoughts; he was interested in psychic research, a subject that had nothing to do with sex. Laurel was a medium, and just now Lanny had a problem he was longing to investigate. This business of his going to Hong-Kong and what was going to happen there! Even apart from any question of his personal concern, he would have liked to try a few séances. What would Otto Kahn have to say about the matter? And would Great-Uncle Eli come, or Zaharoff or Marcel

Detaze or anybody else with warnings? All that Lanny wanted was to be able to sit quietly with pencil and notebook and watch while Laurel went into one of her trances. But there was no place where it could be done on this yacht except in her cabin or Lanny's; and imagine what excitement would have been among souls both born and unborn if he had ventured upon such an enterprise!

XIV

Disturbances in the hearts of passengers had no effect upon Diesel engines, and the *Oriole* drove rapidly westward. The Pacific Ocean justified its name, and day after day there were low swells upon the water and steady blazing heat in the air. They came to the Marquesas the first large group and Lanny's first glimpse of a region about which he had read much colourful writing. The islands loomed up grey on the horizon, and gradually became purple, and when you were near they were a tender green, like velvet upholstery which you might like to stroke. Volcanic cliffs rose out of the water a thousand feet, and behind them were steep mountains; streams made lacy waterfalls, and white birds flew in swarms about the peaks. Here and there were indentations, with native villages amid palm trees. With glasses you could watch the natives running to their canoes, preparing to come out to the yacht if it stopped.

Reverdy had visited here on every trip, and he stood by the rail with Lanny and watched the outrigger canoes of the pearl divers. Here were some of the finest pearl-fishing grounds in the world; from them came black pearls with a marvellous greenish lustre, also black mother-of-pearl. The native divers plunged into the water without diving suits or helmets, and sometimes they worked as deep as seventy feet. They piled the shells into baskets which were hauled up by rope. Sometimes they were mutilated by octopi or sharks, but they carried sharp knives and were expert in using them.

The owner of the *Oriole* was fascinated by the subject of jewels, and Lanny wondered whether that was a cause or a consequence of his reading so many mystery stories. Reverdy said that on the way back they would stop and make purchases—it was an amusing form of speculation. Lanny didn't know anything about the qualities of pearls, but he said politely that he would be happy to learn. Mostly the gems were bought by Chinese traders, who were experts in values; but if you dealt with the natives you might pick up extraordinary bargains. With Reverdy the practice had begun as a diversion, but then the idea had occurred to him that by registering the yacht as a trading vessel he might charge off the costs of the cruise as a business loss in his

income-tax reports. One of his complaints against the war was that this device had been rendered dangerous, and the *Oriole* had become once more a pleasure vessel.

At the large island of Nukuhiva, the scene of Melville's *Typee*, Reverdy knew the French resident and the storekeepers by name. He had notified them in advance of his coming, in order that they might have a supply of fuel on hand for him. They would charge him double prices in wartime, and he would grumble to his secretary and his male guest, but never in the presence of the ladies, bless their delicate souls!

The yacht was laid alongside a pier made of cocoanut palms, and a wheezy pump went to work; meantime the guests would step ashore, and Lanny would have his first good look at the Polynesian people. He didn't see so much as some earlier travellers, because the missionaries had put all the women into long mother hubbards, which may have improved their morals but surely not their looks. Both men and women had straight black hair and put red hibiscus flowers behind their ears. They knew a few French words, enough to sell fruits and trinkets; both men and women helped in carrying stores onto the yacht and they sang as they worked and showed gleaming white teeth when they smiled.

The tourists bought souvenirs, as all tourists do, and Lanny had his first experience of eating a mango. The one he tried was the size of an orange with a satiny reddish skin, and so full of juice that it was hard to break the skin without being deluged. Lanny said that when he ate his second he would be in a bathing suit. The steward of the yacht bought quantities of bananas and other fruits, fresh fish and shell fish, and also some breadfruit, because visitors were always curious about it. After they had tried it boiled they agreed that they preferred hot biscuits, "flannel cakes," and other Maryland delicacies prepared by their coloured cook from home.

The yacht resumed her course. Their next stop would be Samoa, a couple of thousand miles west-south-west. When you looked on the chart you saw it liberally peppered with islands, but when you looked on the sea you might see no island for days; so you realized the vast distances of the Pacific, and the quantity of water that was available for the extraction of magnesium and other minerals. It was the rainy season, and showers appeared from nowhere and vanished to nowhere. The vessel sped through sheets of rain, and they cooled the air; but it soon grew hot again, and the ladies, remembering their complexions, stayed in the shade of the awnings and in midday retired to the interior.

Storms came, and they stayed in their cabins and sometimes lost their appetites. Lanny cheered them with the assurance that it was a good way to reduce, and already Lizbeth had reached the point where she thought about this. She had the same weakness for the cream pitcher that Lanny had observed in his darling mother since childhood.

They were two weeks out from Miami, and Lanny was walking now; also, he was impatient, because he had talked about everything he could think of with Lizbeth, and he wanted to enjoy his own thoughts. He took to reading in his cabin, and came up to stroll late at night after the other guests had retired. It was cool then, and beautiful; the yacht was kept brightly lighted on account of the possibility of a German raider. The stars were clear bright lamps hung in the sky, just as the ancient Egyptians had believed them to be. Everything that moved on the sea made phosphorescence, and the pathway of the *Oriole* was black and gold, like the colours of the Baltimore bird.

Lanny had his future to plan, and it took a lot of thinking. Did it occur to him that Laurel Creston might experience the same need? Writers of stories have to work out their next scene, and sometimes they like to stroll while doing it. Some day a novelist might want to describe a tropic night as it appears from the stern of a fast-moving vessel. Then, too, it might occur to a keen psychologist that a male guest might weary of the same feminine society, and crave solitude and a chance to commune with the stars.

Anyhow, it happened that when Lanny stole out of his cabin and up to the quarter-deck, which was reserved for the guests, there was Laurel standing by the taffrail and gazing out upon the black and gold water. All Lanny's interest in the stars vanished suddenly and he went to her side and said in a low voice: "Good evening, Laurel." It was his first real chance for a talk alone since their last drive together in New York.

She was startled, and whispered: "Oh, Lanny!" Then she added quickly: "We must not be seen together."

"Why not?"—somewhat hypocritically, it must be granted.

"You know perfectly well." She stopped abruptly, as if she had meant to say "Lanny" again, but she did not repeat it during the talk. "It would make somebody else unhappy and ruin the cruise."

"Listen," he said. "I want you to understand, once for all, I am not under any obligation in that quarter." He was taking her hint and not speaking names.

"Do you really mean that?"

"I mean it most positively."

"Well, certainly someone has a different idea."

"If she has that idea, it is because she has made it for herself. More than a year ago the father asked me in plain words to state my

intentions, and I did so. I said that the nature of my work made it impossible for me to remain at home long enough to make any woman happy. My 'no' was as positive as politeness permitted."

"Well, probably they assume that your accident will have changed that."

"If they assume it, they have certainly had no confirmation from me. I have at all times made plain my status as a friend."

There was a pause; then Laurel said: "I don't know what to say, except that there is going to be a terrible unhappiness."

"When I accepted a generous invitation, I said that my affairs might compel me to return before the cruise was over. Do you think I ought to leave at Samoa, or some other place where I can get a plane or a vessel?"

"I could not give such advice. That is something you have to decide. All I can say is that you and I ought not to be seen talking together."

"There is no one about at this hour."

"Some member of the crew may be passing, and the gossip would be all over the ship. We will both be considered to have been acting dishonourably."

She might have turned and walked away, but she didn't, and Lanny took it as an opportunity for one more question. "Tell me, if you don't mind, what you are writing."

"I have started on the novel I told you about."

"And don't you think you ought to have my help?"

"I should be more than glad to have it, but not while we are guests under these strange conditions."

"Might it not be possible for you to slip me a bundle of the manuscript? I could keep it locked up and read it in my cabin and write you comments that might be useful."

Again a silence, while she thought. Then the reply: "All right, I will do that. And now, good night. Don't think me rude or uncordial."

"Assuredly I will never think you either of those things; at least not unless you call me a troglodyte, as you did the first time we met!"

He heard a little laugh as she turned and vanished in the dimly lighted saloon.

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22

How Happy Could I Be!

I

ONE of the books which Cousin Jennie had read aloud to her patient was *Vailima Letters*; and so what Samoa meant to Lanny Budd was Robert Louis Stevenson. That is the advantage a writer has over other men; his imaginings outlast the labours of statesmen and kings. It appears that mankind likes its imaginings to be sad: and so the story of this romantic storyteller, seeking refuge from the tubercle bacillus upon a lonely Pacific isle, has touched the hearts of men and women all over the world and made his personality as popular as his books.

Reverdy said that Stevenson's home and grave were in the western group, which had been mandated to New Zealand, but that small country didn't seem to relish its share of the white man's burden. He said that the *Oriole* would pass that island but not stop until they were on the way back. He said furthermore that romantic writers had given the public an incorrect idea of life among the white shadows of the South Seas. It was supposed to be a lazy and carefree life, and that might be true for white people who came with money in their pockets and could employ servants; but it certainly wasn't true of the natives, who had to work about as hard as mechanics and small farmers at home. To speak of living on cocoanuts and fish sounded attractive—but only to people who had never opened a cocoanut and had no conception of the hard work it required. As for fish, you had to catch them, and that meant paddling a canoe to where they were. In tropical lands if you wanted to eat them every day you had to catch them every day, for you couldn't keep them overnight.

Laurel ventured the guess that at least the fish were always there, and the cocoanuts; whereas at home the mechanic might be out of a job, and the farmer was at the mercy of the market. That was a mistake, for it touched off her uncle and made it necessary for the company at the dinner table to listen to a discourse to the effect that the so-called unemployment problem was in great part the invention of political demagogues. The men who were out of jobs were the least competent, and those who suffered did so because they had failed to save their money against a time of depression. Reverdy explained

that if you helped them you destroyed the incentive to frugality and began that process of demoralization which had destroyed ancient Rome.

Everybody listened respectfully, including Lanny Budd; he watched Lizbeth, and saw the filial devotion in her eyes, and realized that she had been absorbing such doctrine since childhood, and how vain was the idea that anybody could change her way of looking at the world. He did not dare even to glance at Laurel, for fear there might come a trace of a smile upon his lips or hers. Life on board the *Oriole* exemplified the old-time saying: "Whose bread I eat, his song I sing"—or, at any rate, his song I hear !

II

Their destination was the large island of Tutuila, and its port of Pago-Pago, pronounced for some unknown reason Pango-Pango. This had become an American naval station, and the island was ruled by a naval officer. Proceeding along the shore, and close to it, the yacht tooted its whistle and the inhabitants of a village came streaming out to wave to them. That was the home of Chief Lilioukao, whose friend Reverdy had become years ago; always they paid a visit to him, and took him presents, and he gave them a feast. With the glasses you felt yourself so near that you could almost talk to this tall old man, wearing a flowered cloth, a *pareu* about his loins, and nothing else but a grey moustache. There was his daughter, and she had a baby in her arms, and the baby was new. The whistle tooted some more, and the people and the dogs raced along the beach dancing with delight.

The yacht entered the harbour, and found a United States cruiser there, and a destroyer. The yacht was made fast to a pier, a hose was connected up, and oil began to flow into the tanks. Meantime the guests went ashore, and this time Lanny was able to go along. They inspected a half-primitive and half-civilized town, and bought a few knick-knacks, as all tourists do. Later, as the sun began to go down, Reverdy hired two motor cars to take them calling upon his Polynesian friends.

All these Pacific islands are volcanic in origin, and those which are not coral atolls are masses of mountains; the natives live in the valleys, and the roads, except along the shore, are mere tracks. Heavy showers fall almost every day in the rainy season, and the vegetation is astonishing to visitors from colder lands. Reverdy explained that the people were warm-hearted and extremely courteous; always you took them gifts, and if you showed the slightest interest in any of their

possessions, they would insist upon giving it to you. In the old days simple trinkets had delighted them, but nowadays they had come to know what was good. Lizbeth had gone on a shopping expedition in Baltimore, buying such things as shawls and ornamental slippers for the women, neckties and cigarette lighters for the men, and candy for the children. Everyone in the village would receive something, even if it was only a ten-cent package of gumdrops.

In a valley cut by a swiftly flowing stream and shaded by cocoanut, banana, and plantain trees, the seven guests of the *Oriole* were welcomed by three or four score of these primitive people. The men were tall and handsome; the women, called *vahines*—van-hee-nays—had put on their best finery for the occasion. Everybody had been preparing for the expected visit; the children had gathered green cocoanuts for the drink, and huge banana leaves were spread on the ground in the grove where the feast was to be. The dishes were clean shells, and you ate with your fingers and wiped them on a damp cloth when you were through.

These people knew some French words, and Reverdy knew a few of their native words and had taught them to the other guests. In the Marquesas, food had been *kai-kai*; here it was *ai-ai*. The first course was raw fish, caught since the yacht had been sighted and then cleaned and soaked in lime juice. Then came roasted chickens; the native oven is a small pit filled with hot stones; the food is wrapped in wet green leaves, and it comes out with a delicious flavour. Each course is washed down with cocoanut milk, sweet yet sharp in taste. There were yams and taro; and then came the crowning glory, a procession of half a dozen girls, each bearing a great shell containing a young pig, roasted whole, and with the scorched leaves still shrouding it. This was a laughing ceremony, with a native playing a tune upon an accordion, and all singing English words in honour of their guests. The tune and words were: "I am a soldier of the cross," which presumably they had learned in some near-by mission. It wasn't exactly appropriate, but it didn't spoil the taste of roasted pig.

Later they sang native songs and danced for their guests. The moon came up and shone through the palm fronds, many of them more than a hundred feet in the air; the leaves rustled softly and their shadows wove shifting patterns over the dancers and the swaying spectators. For this ceremony the women wore their old-time grass skirts, and Lanny thought the scene one of the loveliest he had ever witnessed. The parting was sorrowful, and the guests drove back to the yacht loaded with poi pounders, sewing-baskets, calabashes, mats of woven straw, tapa cloth, and bonita hooks carved from pearl shell and used for trolling.

III

The yacht resumed its course to the westward. A day or two later Lanny happened to encounter Laurel Creston in one of the passageways. She was carrying a manila envelope of manuscript size and she slipped it into his hand. He went back to his cabin, and thereafter for an hour or two was lost to the world of the Baltimore *Oriole*.

Yes, she was going to have a novel, made up of what she had seen in Germany and what Lanny had told her about the insides of the Nazi soul. It was the story of a girl, the daughter of an American professor of literature in a middle-western college. The father had studied at Heidelberg in his youth, and being a poet and something of a dreamer, he did not know much about what had been happening in Germany during the 'twenties and early 'thirties. He still thought of the Fatherland as the home of *Gemütlichkeit* and the other old-time virtues, and he had told his daughter so much about it that she had decided to follow in his footsteps in search of her Ph.D.

There was enough of these early scenes to make the reader acquainted with America and its naïve idealism, and then he travelled with Paula Seton to Heidelberg and its *gleichgeschaltete Universität*. Lanny knew that Laurel had studied at Goucher College, so that part was easy enough, but she hadn't been to any German university, except perhaps as a tourist. Evidently she had done a lot of reading in the public library, and she had got off to a good start with her German professor's family; its father dominant at home, subservient as a Party member; its devoted slavish mother and its Nazified children—all but one unhappy son, who obviously was destined for a love affair with Paula and for some heart-breaking tragedy.

There were details that Lanny could find fault with, but the characters came alive and he perceived that the story was going to reveal the sharp contrast between Nazi and democratic ideals, now so obviously headed for a conflict. He found a chance to murmur to his friend: "It is good!" Then he shut himself up in his cabin and spent a lot of time making notes for her.

This time had to be stolen from Lizbeth, and she missed it and asked, poutingly: "What are you doing all the time?" He couldn't say: "I am revising your cousin's manuscript." He had to say: "I have not been feeling well. It may be something I ate at that feast." He knew that Lizbeth hadn't enjoyed eating food with her fingers. She thought of primitive people as she did of the Negroes at home.

When the notes were done, Lanny watched for a chance to slip them to Laurel; and of course when she had read them she had to thank him, and to answer some of his points and ask questions about

others. It was really quite annoying that they couldn't have a heart-to-heart talk; the business of writing notes and then looking about to make sure there was nobody watching made them both appear guilty and even feel so. Manlike, Lanny found it exasperating to be unable to do what he wanted. He felt less kind toward the skipper's daughter, and this was certain sooner or later to show in his manner.

Even without this new factor, the discontent of Lizbeth was bound to increase. She didn't want mere politeness from Lanny; she wanted love, and wasn't getting it. She had the sense of being watched by the world of this yacht; and while it was a small world, it was as important to her as if it had been large. Sooner or later the guests would know the exact situation, for Lizbeth would have to confide in some woman, and that one would tell the others. Lanny wondered: would it be Dr. Carroll, or Miss Hayman, Lizbeth's teacher, or Mrs. Gillis, the family friend. This last, a widow in her fifties, paid her way by making herself useful to Lizbeth, not taking orders but anticipating them. If they were going to play cards it was Mrs. Gillis who got the cards and the score sheet and pencil; if there was a bell to be rung she rang it and if there was an order to a servant to be given she gave it. Sooner or later, Lanny guessed, Lizbeth would break down and tell this lady about her humiliation; and then, would Mrs. Gillis take the place of Lizbeth's mother and come to Lanny about it? Damnation!

IV

Another five days of hot sunshine and frequent cloudbursts, and they were in the Solomons. Here was a quite different region, not Polynesia, but Melanesia. The inhabitants were blacks with masses of kinky hair; they had been cannibals, and in the interior no doubt still were. A forbidding land of impenetrable jungles and swamps, full of snakes and disease-carrying insects. Glad indeed the guests were that they didn't have to go ashore on these immense islands, whose tangled vegetation came down to the water's edge and whose hills appeared to be always steaming and shrouded in mists. A dozen deadly diseases lurked there; Jack London claimed to have collected no fewer than nine on his famed cruise of the *Snark*. His book was in the yacht's library, and Lanny read it, well satisfied to be on a larger vessel and to survey the cannibal coast through a pair of field-glasses. The book warned him to be careful not to get any scratch or cut while on the islands, because it would turn into what was called a "Solomon sore"; it would spread, and sometimes eat all the way to the bone. A sea captain's remedy was to apply a poultice made of ship's biscuit soaked in water; and this was an inter-

esting example of how folk medicine frequently anticipates science. At this time men in the laboratories were working upon the discovery that mouldy bread nourishes an organism called *Penicillium notatum* which astonished them by its power to stop the growth of harmful bacteria.

Also in the yacht's library was a pamphlet in the language of this region, and Lanny found it an amusing subject of study. It is an odd lingo called *beche-de-mer*, representing what the blacks and the traders have made of English. A man is a "he fella" and woman is a "fella mary." The pamphlet in Lanny's hands contained Bible stories prepared by the missionaries for their pupils, and it was curious to see how the Garden of Eden appeared in Melanesia. After Adam had eaten the apple, he became aware of the fact that Eve was naked, and, according to the story, "This fella Adam he say along this fella mary: 'Eve, you no got calico!'"

The Solomons are laid in two columns, and between them is a wide passage. The names of the islands Lanny read from the chart and they were all new to him. He had heard of Bougainville as an explorer, and knew that the beautiful flowering vine which covered the walls inside the court at *Bienvenu* had been named for him; but he didn't know there was a Bougainville Island, nor yet a Florida Island, and he had never heard anywhere the names of Savo, Rendova, Tulagi, Guadalcanal. Perhaps if he had been in position to try a séance with Laurel, there might have come some warning from the spirits, some intimation of the history that hovered over these nightmare jungles, awaiting its time to be born. Perhaps Sir Basil Zaharoff would have come, reporting the crash of heavy guns and pretending—old rascal!—that although he had made these shells and bombs he had never expected them to be exploded. Perhaps Grandfather Samuel Budd would have come, quoting the Old Testament Jehovah calling for the extermination of His enemies. Perhaps Laurel's paternal grandfather, who had been a Navy man, would have hailed the heroes who were destined here to make their names immortal. Too bad that a séance couldn't be tried.

Lanny, having no trace of the psychic gift himself, stood by the taffrail of the *Oriole*, looking down into this dark blue water, and did not know that this passage was "The Slot," and that before half a year had passed it would be black with oil and red with the blood of dying men. He saw the dark fins of sharks cutting the surface, and did not know that they were soon to be fed upon shiploads of Americans and Japanese. He watched the yacht glide into the splendid deep harbour of Tulagi, capital of the island group, and no hunch told him that a great enemy fleet would be wrecked here, and the shores and bottom sprinkled with steel hulks of all sizes. Just so on his

honeymoon with Irma had Lanny steamed into the harbour of Narvik in northern Norway, and got no hint of battles to be fought there. He knew about them now, and marvelled at the impenetrable veil which hides the future from the eyes of men. Perhaps it is a mercy, and they will do themselves a disservice if they ever succeed in breaking through it.

These were British islands, and Tulagi, the government seat, was headquarters of a number of trading firms. In addition there was a Chinese settlement, and these traders went out in shallow-draught sail-boats into waters too dangerous for the whites; their boats had show-cases on deck with a glass cover, so that the natives who came aboard could inspect the trinkets without being able to touch them. With one of the white firms Reverdy had an arrangement to hold a supply of Diesel oil for him each winter; he took the same meticulous care of the yacht that he took of himself, and never let the tanks get more than half empty, for in these wartimes you couldn't be sure what you were going to find at the next port.

While fuel was being pumped aboard, the passengers went ashore and visited the home of an official, a fine bungalow with a wide, screened veranda with green matting and wicker chairs. He was an Australian, and like all the others from whatever part of the world, was counting the weeks or months or years before he would go home. All the white men wore khaki shirts and shorts, and many had bandages around the calves of their legs—Solomon sores! The trader presented Lizbeth with a young megapode, a small black bird, round and comical in appearance, which he said came from Savo Island near by. These birds lay one egg almost as large as themselves, and bury it three or four feet deep in the warm sand; the natives watch the procedure and then dig up the egg for food. Lizbeth was told that she would have to feed the creature small pieces of fish at frequent intervals, and she fully intended to do it. But she found it too inconvenient, and the megapode died very soon. Then she was remorseful.

The yacht put out to sea before sunset, to avoid the mosquitoes and other disease-carrying insects. That was one way to keep out of trouble in the tropics; and another was to watch the vessel's course day and night and keep away from the narrow channels between the islands, where swift unpredictable currents are perilous. In these volcanic regions small islands appear suddenly; others sink beneath the sea, and then the infinite numbers of tiny coral flower-animals

go to work and build them up, and they become atolls, or reefs with sharp points full of deadly danger. Charts become out-of-date, and the only way to be safe is to restrain your curiosity and keep to the well-established trade routes where you have sea room in case of storms.

Reverdy kept all these matters in his mind, and did not trouble the guests with them. He had seen to it that the refrigerators were stocked with fresh vegetables which could not be obtained in the tropics; now and then they would stop and buy fish from fishermen. The owner kept on board a supply of trade goods, and apparently plenty of money, or he knew where to get it. Also, he had plenty of time and never let anything hurry him; one place on the sea was much like another, and the *Oriole* had proved her ability to ride out the worst storms the Pacific could produce.

VI

So the guests on board the yacht had no cares, and it was assumed that they were perfect models of contentment. But it has long been the practice of humans who have no troubles to set to work and make some; and so, alas, it proved in this case. Here was a presidential agent who had been released "on furlough" and ordered to take a long rest; but he was discontented because he wanted to talk to a lady novelist and wasn't allowed to. Instead of leaving it for her to work out her story in her own way, he kept thinking of ideas which might be of interest to her, and he wanted to tell her about them. After several days he worked himself into a state of irritation; one afternoon when he discovered her sitting under the awning in a steamer chair, peacefully reading a book, he drew up another chair beside her. "I have a suggestion about your Professor Holitzer," he remarked casually—as though they were two ordinary people who had the right to sit side by side and discuss the manners and morals, costumes and dietetic habits, vocabulary and *Weltanschauung* of university professors in Nazified Germany!

She looked at him, startled, as if he had come waving a red flag of revolution. After a pause she said: "We really ought not to do this."

"I've been thinking it over," he declared. "I think it's just too silly that I shouldn't be able to talk to you."

"We can't change the facts. The only question is, are we prepared to pay the price?"

"So far as I am concerned, the answer is yes."

"It will be disagreeable for both of us, you must be aware."

"I am concerned only about being fair to you. Do you feel yourself

under a moral obligation in the matter? And do you value what you might lose through being my friend?" He was being careful not to name any names.

"Let us get it exactly right. There is going to be a great disappointment for somebody. That is inevitable, from what you have told me."

"Yes, that is certain."

"The question then is, whether you alone are to be blamed, or whether both of us shall take a share. In the latter case, my share will be much greater. You know that is the fate of women."

"I see what you mean, and perhaps it is too high a price for you."

"I have not said that. I am just facing the facts, as I understand you always prefer to do."

"By all means, yes."

"I am an independent woman. I earn my own living and I do not need gifts or family support. But, on the other hand, I am a guest, and that means that I have voluntarily accepted certain obligations. I ask myself: Is it enough that I shall have a good conscience? Or should I not avoid the appearance of evil?"

"The evil being to be my friend?"

"The evil is to appear to be cutting someone out of the thing which she wants more than anything else in the world."

"But which she is not going to get!"

"She doesn't know that and nothing could convince her of it. She will be seeking in her mind for an explanation—and suddenly I will supply it. Never so long as we live could I convince her that I am not guilty."

That was stating the case with scientific precision. He sat returning her clear, honest gaze, and deciding that he liked people who spoke in that straightforward way, even when their conclusions were inconvenient. He wished to deal with her on that same basis, and ventured: "Tell me, why did you come here?"

"Because you wrote me that you were coming, and I thought it would be a pleasant trip."

"You wanted my help with the book?"

"Of course; you had offered it so generously. But also I thought it would be fun to be with you."

"You didn't know how matters stood with me and the other person?"

"I had heard hints, but I had no idea it was so serious."

"And if you had known it, you wouldn't have come?"

"I had no way to find out, except by coming. This cruise won't last forever; and if we meet afterwards, that won't shock anybody as it could now."

Lanny saw that it was time to move, and did so. He had hardly

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Lanny saw that it was time to move, and did so. He had hardly

taken a dozen steps before Lizbeth appeared in the doorway of the saloon. He wondered if she had been watching them through a window; he resented having to feel guilty, but he was too trained in self-control to show it. He joined his would-be fiancée and invited her to walk. They could talk about the last port they had been to, and the family they had called upon. In class these persons were far below any she would have met in Baltimore, but cruising in the South Seas was like "slumming." She wanted to know why their last host had called himself an "Astrylian," and Lanny explained that the colony had been settled by cockney emigrants, many of them convicts. Hearing that, the daughter of the Holdenhursts crossed "Astrylia" off her visiting list.

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The next destination of the *Oriole* was the Philippines. The course led between New Britain and New Ireland, and here too were great harbours, Rabaul and Kavieng, soon to be prominent in the world's news. But Lanny continued in his insensibility to the future; his thoughts were perforce taken up with the woman question. Frequently he had in mind the familiar old English song: "How happy could I be with either, were t'other dear charmer away;" he had now decided upon a revised version: "How happy could I be with Laurel were Lizbeth away." He had definitely made up his mind that brains were more than beauty, and that he couldn't imagine what he would talk about on his next stroll with the skipper's daughter.

He hit upon a procedure which might have seemed malicious, but he told himself that it was a psychological experiment. He would find out whether Laurel was right in her idea of how her cousin would behave under the spell of the "green-eyed monster." There were three other ladies available, and Lanny selected Dr. Althea Carrol, not because she was the youngest, but because she was the most interesting to talk to. He had conceived a regard for this earnest young woman, who had not a frivolous cell in her organism. He was sure he couldn't do her any harm, for she would never dream of standing in Lizbeth's way. Besides, they were due to part in ten days, and the chances of their ever seeing each other again were slender.

All right! Lanny drew his chair close alongside that of the lady doctor, who spent her time in a quiet spot studying medical publications. Lanny engaged her in conversation concerning the diseases which they had observed among the natives in the Marquesas, Samoa, and the Solomons. That dreadful elephantiasis, for example; people's arms, legs, or other parts grew to enormous size, and the sight had almost destroyed the appetite of the guests at the Tutuilan feast. The



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CHAPTER VII

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doctor explained that the trouble was due to the clogging of the lymphatic glands, and there were two forms of the disease, one caused by microscopic thread-like worms; that was known as filariasis. The other form was more obscure; it might be due to cancerous material, or tubercular. All very learned, but, you must admit, hardly elegant, hardly in accord with the standards of Miss Emily Post.

In the midst of it, Lizbeth showed up on deck; she invariably did so whenever Lanny was there, and he wondered if she kept a vigil by the clock. The psychological test required that he should display the utmost politeness, so he arose and offered her his chair. "Dr. Carroll is telling me about the diseases of China," he said—they had taken a jump of a few thousand miles. He drew up another chair, and the doctor went on talking; this was her hobby, honestly come by, and there was nothing she knew or cared so much about.

If you have a hobby, and are so fortunate as to meet people who are rich, you cannot avoid having in the back of your mind the thought that they may be willing to put up money to enable your work to go faster and farther. Of course the rich people know it, so as a rule they try to keep away from the hobbyists. Like the war between armour plate and gun, between battleship and aeroplane bomb, so is the war between the safety-deposit box and the betterment of humanity. Young Dr. Althea was thinking of all the ragged, undernourished, and suffering people who stood patiently the whole day long at the door of her father's clinic. She told about beri-beri, a disease of malnutrition, and about tuberculosis, which has malnutrition as a preliminary stage. She talked about syphilis, and yaws, a variety of it. She talked about the opium habit, which the Japanese were deliberately fostering in the conquered parts of China, both for the profit they made out of it and the impotence it produced in their subject populations. She told about women who bore sickly babies with no medical attention whatever, and explained that she had taken special courses in obstetrics in order to be able to open a school for midwives.

In all her life Lizbeth had never heard anybody talking like that. She had never dreamed that any woman would talk so in the presence of a man. She became more and more restless, and finally broke in to remind them of a radio broadcast they were accustomed to hear. When she was alone with Lanny she exclaimed: "What on earth got Althea to talking about stuff like that?"

He had to be fair to the hard-working doctor, so he hastened to say: "I asked her. We are going to China, and we ought to know about conditions there."

"I don't want to know about such conditions anywhere," declared this daughter of privilege. "There's nothing we can do about such things, and why should we make ourselves sick thinking about them?"

## VIII

That was only the beginning of the experiment. For several days thereafter this devil in polo shirt and tennis trousers availed himself of opportunities for conversation with an authority on Chinese manners and morals, costumes and dietetic habits, vocabulary and *Weltanschauung*—though of course they didn't call it that. Their name for it was the *Lun-Yii* or *Analects of Confucius*, a sage of twenty-five centuries ago who had taught them to face the bitter realities of life with courage, understanding, and patience. Infinite patience one had to have in order to exist in an overcrowded land, as China had been even in Confucius's time. The world was very old, and growing older, and human beings were far from perfect and growing no better. Learn to protect yourself with wisdom, and manifest benevolence when possible.

Lanny was surprised to discover that this was a very intelligent young woman indeed. She had been so quiet and tightly shut, like a white camellia bud; now under the warmth of his interest she blossomed into flower. He understood, of course, that her eloquence was due in part to the fact that she knew the Budds were rich people, perhaps as rich as the Holdenhursts. Grandfather Samuel had supported foreign missions, and so had other devout members of this old family. Lanny guessed that it might be possible to interest some of the new generation in what was going on in the antipodes.

Althea had probably never taken any courses in psychology, and so failed to realize what was happening to her friendship with the Holdenhursts while she was cultivating the Budds. Lizbeth was cooking herself into a stew of vexation. She didn't want to sit and hear that kind of talk, and she couldn't understand why Lanny persisted in inviting it. Was it just to tease her? Or was he trying to get away from her? She understood only too well the inadequacies of her conversation, but that didn't salve her wounded feelings. When he suggested that China was as important a subject of study as art or literature, and that Lizbeth and Miss Hayman might become pupils of the learned young doctor for a while, Lizbeth was annoyed beyond endurance. She listened to Miss Hayman because Miss Hayman was a teacher, and was paid to talk; but who had asked Althea to set herself up? The truth was plain enough that Lizbeth didn't really want to listen to any female's talk; she wanted to listen to a man's.

The next time he invited her to sit in at such a tête-à-tête, she said sharply: "No, thank you," and went off and settled herself to reading a book. But she couldn't keep up that bluff, and presently got up and went to her cabin. Lanny did nothing about it, because at the moment

he was especially interested in what Althea was telling him. Her father, it appeared, was something of a liberal, and besides teaching young Chinese about American medical science, he had taught them about freedom and self-government. He had been a friend of Sun Yat-sen, the great republican leader, and had had something to do with the drafting of the Three People's Principles which were the foundation of the republican movement of that vast inchoate land. Sun was dead, but his widow lived in a suburb of Hong-Kong, and her home was a sort of shrine to which liberals from all nations repaired. The Japanese, of course, were doing all they could to wipe out the movement, for they did not want a free enlightened China but a mass of ignorant and helpless slaves.

Lanny said: "You interest me greatly, Dr. Carroll. Do you suppose Madame Sun would receive an American art expert?"

"I am sure it would please her greatly," was the reply.

"You must explain to her that I am not a political person, but I am interested in understanding the Chinese people and their art, which is bound to be influenced by this new renaissance."

"Indeed that is true, Mr. Budd, and it is fascinating to see Chinese artists using their old techniques upon modern themes. In New York I met a young Chinese who was painting American subjects such as strike scenes, with the idea of sending them back to his homeland, but Americans are so interested in his work that they buy it up as fast as he can produce it."

## IX

In the midst of this conversation Lanny overlooked entirely the possibility that the skipper's daughter might be weeping in her cabin. When he thought it over afterwards he decided that his psychological researches had been successful. The next time he met Laurel alone he stopped long enough to whisper: "I have been trying an experiment, and you were dead right about what would happen."

She didn't need to ask what he was referring to. She had devoted her mind to the subject of psychology, and was observing everything that went on in this little sea-bound world. What she said was: "Oh, how cruel!" Lanny went off chuckling, and wondering whom he had been cruel to—Lizbeth, Althea, or possibly Laurel Creston.

It was like being married into the Holdenhurst family, so the man decided. If he became Lizbeth's husband, she would make him a little world exactly like this. It wouldn't always be sea-bound, but would be bound by the limits of her understanding and interests. She would love him with absorption and watch him with the jealousy of a tigress.

She would know that she was his intellectual inferior, and would fear all persons, men or women, who might claim to be his intellectual equals. If such persons got his time and attention, she would hate them; her feeling for her husband would come to be half love, half hate, that strange ambivalence which is so common and so little understood. Some day, sooner or later, Lanny would say: "I never really loved you, and I cannot stand hating you, so good-bye."

This while they were crossing the Bismarck Sea. They might have headed north-west, direct to Manila, but the course would have taken them across a corner of the Japanese mandate, and this they had been advised to avoid. They proceeded westward, along the coast of New Guinea, but not in sight of it. Here, too, were names of towns and villages, Lae and Buna, Aitape and Hollandia, which would soon be of interest to historians. When they had passed the 134th degree of longitude, they turned toward the north, across the equator. From that time on, each day would find the weather a trifle less hot, and this would please them; even Lanny had had enough of being parboiled, and the laundryman on board was working overtime to keep their linen immaculate.

One person to whom the weather made slight difference was Laurel. Every morning she stayed in her air-cooled cabin and hammered on the typewriter; she read and revised and tore up and wrote again, she was living in a dream world of her own creation, and the characters in that world were fully as real to her as the physical beings around her. At any rate she tried to keep it that way, and reported to Lanny that she was succeeding. They exchanged a few sentences now and then, as any gentleman might who passed a lady sitting in a steamer chair. Before they reached Davao, in the southern Philippines, she handed him another bunch of manuscript, and the notes he wrote about it made her eyes sparkle. He had a lot to say, and no typewriter on which to say it; the little portable which had served him for many years was somewhere at the bottom of the cold North Atlantic.

This odd literary intrigue went on under the noses of the host and his daughter. The conspirators carried it on with secret smiles, but they well understood that it was a serious matter; the case of Althea had shown them that there would be no peace aboard the *Oriole* if Lizbeth discovered what was going on. She would be much angrier with Laurel, a member of the family, than with a woman doctor whom she considered wholly out of the running in the matrimonial sweepstakes. Lanny had dropped his sudden interest in Chinese affairs, but Lizbeth was still restless and miserable, waiting for him to behave as an eligible man is supposed to behave when he reclines in a steamer chair under a large yellow tropic moon.



## X

The port of Davao was out of their way, lying at the head of a long gulf; but the cautious skipper had been told that he could get fuel there, and he took the precaution. They stopped for a few hours and drove about in a hot town whose suburbs had been well laid out by the Americans. Hemp and copra were the main products of the region, and the roads were populous with crude carts drawn by carabao—creatures whose one idea, when they got loose, was to wallow in mud. The people had been taught in American schools and seemed more contented than any whom the *Oriole's* passengers had so far encountered.

This archipelago had been promised independence in another five years, and there was a lot of speculation about it. Reverdy was of the opinion that the people weren't ready for it; they had been conquered by one power after another through all their history, and if the Americans moved out the Japs would surely move in. Already they were on hand, having a large and busy settlement in Davao. Reverdy said that the success of the independence movement was owing to the fact that American growers of sugar beets and other products wanted to get rid of Filipino competition, and were glad to get their little brown brothers outside the United States tariff enclave.

Lanny had reason for being interested in the Philippines, because of a story which Great-Uncle Eli Budd had told him in his youth. Eli's elder brother had happened to visit the islands just after the war with Spain, and had been shocked to discover American troops engaged in suppressing the efforts of a primitive people for freedom and self-government. He had started a protest, and because of his family position had been able to make quite a stir; he hadn't been able to stop the war against Aguinaldo's forces, but he had perhaps helped to meliorate their treatment, and to set up the American public-school system in the country when the fighting was over. That was the way with reformers, Eli Budd had said; they appeared to fail, but little by little their ideas change the world. Lanny didn't say anything about this to the skipper of the *Oriole*, for the word "reformer" was a fighting word to him—or, at any rate, a talking word, and when he got started it was hard to stop him.

## XI

Southward out of the gulf, and then northward along the coast of the large island of Mindanao. Presently they were in the San Bernardino Strait, narrow and deep pathway of many ships. Here again

fierce battles were to be fought and great vessels were to go down, but no echo of guns was heard by the guests on the *Oriole*. They might have gone straight to Hong-Kong and saved time, but Reverdy had ordered mail sent to Manila, so they headed for there. The air grew cooler, and they watched the traffic of the South China Sea, with junks and native fishing craft of many designs. It was a crossroads of the world's traffic, and with airmail and newspapers to look forward to, they felt that they were coming back into civilization.

Pleasant indeed to glide into the broad shallow bay of Manila, with a well-informed skipper standing by to point out the landmarks; on the one side Bataan Peninsula and the island of Corregidor, heavily fortified, and on the other side the naval base of Cavite. Undoubtedly we should keep these points, declared Reverdy; and the Japs would get a warm reception if they came. The naval battle which had been fought here was recorded in all the guide books and required no psychic powers to reveal. The skipper of the *Oriole* could imagine himself in the role of Admiral Dewey, surveying the Spanish fleet through his glasses, and remarking to his subordinate: "You may fire when you are ready, Lanny."

Pleasant, also, to go ashore and hire a comfortable car and be driven about a modern city with fine buildings and all the conveniences. The first destination was the bank where mail for the yacht had been sent; there you were treated as distinguished guests, and escorted to the directors' room, a sack of mail was dumped before you, and you had a grand time sorting it into piles. Then to sit and run through it, each guest with his or her own chair and his or her own secrets, joyful or sad.

Lanny had his generous stack, including newspapers and magazines which would keep him interested for many a morning on deck. There was a letter from Robbie which had left Newcastle, Connecticut, only six days ago, and had been flown almost half-way around the world. No particular news; everybody was well, and business booming; what the end would be no man could guess. Lanny must be sure to cable from Manila; they would be awaiting word about his health. Lanny would do so, of course; he would cable Beauty and Rick and little Frances.

Also he would go strolling in the compact old Spanish city called Intramuros, which was Manila's glory. He would stroll into shops and buy many things of which he had been discovering the need during the past month. The steward of the yacht would renew its stock of canned goods and many sorts of fresh foods. The primitive world is picturesque and entertaining, and picture postcards of it are fun to send to your friends; but in the long run what you want is civilization, and a pocketful of money so that you can command its benefits.

Even the cheap ones ! Even a morning newspaper, which costs only five cents—and yet you would pay five dollars for it if you were where you couldn't get it ! The radio does not take its place, as you soon learn. The civilized man has got used to depending upon his eyes, and perhaps he needs the headline writer to work up appreciation of events. From the *Manila Times* the son of Budd-Erling learned that the Russians were fighting furiously on their snowbound steppes and in their shell-blasted towns; the enemy had been driven back from the suburbs of Moscow and had not quite got into those of Leningrad. The British were holding out at Tobruk, and the Germans had not managed to break through to Alexandria and the Suez Canal, as everybody, including Lanny, had feared they would.

## XII

It was the forenoon of the 4th of December, 1941, when the trim white *Oriole* retraced her course out of the harbour of Manila and round the point of Bataan Peninsula. The distance to Hong-Kong was given on the chart as 631 miles, and they were due to arrive on the morning of the 6th. Lanny looked forward to spending most of the interim catching up with his newspapers and magazines; but the fates had something else in store for him.

Driving to the dock where the yacht lay he had observed something peculiar in the manner of the skipper's daughter. Never did she meet his eyes, and she appeared to be in a state of nervous agitation. He wondered if she had had bad news from home. But it wasn't up to him to ask questions, any more than it is up to a man sitting on a powder-keg to strike matches. No, let sleeping dogs lie, and let love-lorn ladies keep their own counsel as long as they consent to do so. Lanny went to his cabin, saying that he had seen enough of Manila Bay, and had letters to prepare for mailing in Hong-Kong.

At dinner-time, in the dining-saloon, Lizbeth had little to say. Lanny watched her, but only in brief glances. Usually she had a good appetite, but now she left half the food on her plate. Could it be that her eyes were red with weeping ? He wasn't sure, but when she excused herself before the coffee he knew there was something wrong. He hadn't misbehaved, and he wondered if Laurel had, or Althea.

As the guests went up to the main saloon for the customary game of bridge, Lanny found reason to linger, and so did Laurel. She stopped just long enough to whisper: " Meet me on deck at eleven o'clock."

He knew she would never have done that unless there was an emergency. He said: " There is some trouble ? "

The reply was: "Lizbeth has had a letter from Emily Chattersworth."

When you say: "Oh-ho!" and accent it on the second syllable, it means pleasant surprise, even triumph. But when you accent it on the first syllable and let the second die away, that means something has gone wrong. Lanny excused himself from the card game on the plea that he hadn't finished with his mail. He went to his cabin and thought hard, and the longer he thought the more clearly he realized that the beans had been spilled and the fat was in the fire, the cat was out of the bag and the horse had been stolen from the stable—think of all the metaphors, tropes, similes, metonymys, analogies, catachreses, and synecdoches you can, and still you will not exaggerate the confusion which the châtelain of Les Forêts and Sept Chênes had caused by a few casual words on paper. Lanny could imagine them without asking any questions; for example: "Give my regards to your cousin Laurel. I enjoyed so much meeting her when she was a guest at Bienvenu." Something like that! Maybe it would be in a letter to Lizbeth's mother, which the mother had forwarded, perhaps with an appended inquiry: "Did you know that Laurel had met Lanny Budd in Europe?"

It had been natural enough for Emily to write, for she and Millicent Holdenhurst had been school friends. It would be natural for her to mention Lanny and say kind things about him, for she had done her best to promote a match between Lanny and Lizbeth. It had been possible for her to write, because Washington was maintaining diplomatic relations with Vichy—curse the luck!—and mail, though censored and delayed, eventually came through. Of course Emily, at Cannes, would have had no means of knowing that Lanny, Laurel, and Lizbeth were all three going on the cruise; her letter would have come to Baltimore and been forwarded. Emily, the least malicious person in the world, couldn't have had any idea of the pretty kettle of fish she would be cooking up for her near-foster-son!

### XIII

Promptly at eleven that evening Lanny strolled out to the quarter-deck. The vessel was brightly lighted as always, for a German raider might be a possibility, even this close to British ports. Laurel was standing in a shadowed spot, and Lanny joined her. She said: "Lizbeth received a letter from her mother, enclosing a letter from Mrs. Chattersworth in which she mentioned having met me when I visited Bienvenu. Lizbeth, of course, is in a terrible state of excitement, and accuses me of having come on this cruise in order to break up her chances with you."

"What did you tell her?"

"I told her the truth as far as I could. I said that I was writing stories about the Nazis which were satirical and would make the Nazis very angry; that you were Göring's art adviser, and had told me that it could do you harm if it were known that we were friends. So I promised not to mention that I knew you. She wanted to know how I had come to be at Bienvenu, and I told her that your mother had invited me at a time when you were in America, and that you came much later. That is true, you remember."

"Of course. Did it satisfy Lizbeth?"

"I doubt if anything will satisfy her, except the one thing she wants and which you are not disposed to give her. She is casting about in her mind for an explanation of your coldness, and this letter comes as an answer to all her wonderment."

"What do you intend to do about it?"

"I told her that since I was a source of annoyance to her, I would leave the yacht at Hong-Kong."

"But Laurel! That will knock out your work!"

"I am afraid I couldn't keep my mind on work very well, with my hostess in her present state."

"I must tell you this," said Lanny. "I had about decided to tell your uncle that I was going to fly back to the States from Hong-Kong. It was our agreement that I should have the right to go."

"It will have a very disagreeable appearance, if we should both leave at the same port, Lanny."

"We can travel by different routes, if that is necessary to satisfy Mrs. Grundy."

"We could never get anybody to believe that we didn't contrive to meet again."

"Well, I hope we don't have to give any promise against that, Laurel. I am deeply interested in the family of Professor Holitzer, and also I am interested in the lady who is telling about them." Even in the midst of this grave complexity, Lanny permitted himself the luxury of a smile.

But Southern ladies rarely smile over family "situations." They have been taught to take families seriously, and even if they try not to, the families have the last word. Laurel said with unmistakable firmness: "It would be a scandal if we both left the yacht at the same port, Lanny. If you are going, I shall have to stay."

"But that will be pretty miserable for you. Lizbeth will be sure that you drove me away, and she will not forgive you."

"The decision rests with you. One or the other must stay."

He couldn't keep from seeing the humour of this. "If you go and I stay, Lizbeth will eat me alive. She may get into a position where I

feel that I have compromised her and have to do the honourable thing. You had better hang on and protect me ! ”

## XIV

They had got themselves on the horns of a dilemma; but, as it happened, they didn't have to make the decision. Had the owner's daughter chosen this moment to relieve her nervous tension by a walk on deck? Or had she suspected that the guilty pair were keeping a rendezvous? They were standing with their faces toward the door of the saloon, so that they might not be taken by surprise if anyone came out. When she appeared, Laurel, not wishing her to think they were hiding, spoke quickly: "We are talking about you, Lizbeth. Come over here."

When she was near, she did the talking, as was her right, being the hostess. Her voice was low, and trembled slightly. "I want to tell you both that I mean to behave properly. I have been thinking it over, and realize that you have the right to be in love with each other, and that I have nothing to do with it."

"Lizbeth," said the cousin, breaking in, "I have told you that Lanny has never spoken one syllable of love to me. I give you my word that this is so, and he will do the same."

"Indeed yes, Lizbeth," added the man, no less promptly. "I explained to your father a year or two ago that my position does not permit me to think about love or marriage. I have been Laurel's friend as I have been yours. I have been interested in her writing as I have been interested in your studies, and I have tried to give a little help with both."

"That may all be true," replied Lizbeth. "I have no right to doubt it, but I believe that you are in love whether you know it or not. What I want to say is, it's none of my affair, and I have no right to make a fuss about it and break up the party. I have talked to my father, and it will upset him greatly if either of you leaves, for he depends upon your companionship more than he has let you know. So please let us be friends as we were before, and Lanny is perfectly free to talk to you, or to Althea, or to the others, just as he pleases--and you and he don't have to steal up on deck at night in order to talk about what Laurel is writing, or about me, or anything else."

She got that far, a little speech which no doubt she had rehearsed more than once. At this point came a little choking sob, and she burst into tears and ran quickly back into the saloon.

There was nothing they could do after that but take her at her word. This was what the world calls "good society"; its members

are "well bred," and don't show their emotions in public—or, if they lose their tempers, they owe an apology and pay the debt. Lanny whispered: "That's decent of her!" and added: "Better than I expected."

Said Laurel: "I suspect that Uncle Reverdy put his foot down. Anyhow, it's all we can ask, and I suppose we have to stay, at least for a time."

So that was the way the matter stood next day, and all the way across the South China Sea. Of course Lizbeth would tell Mrs. Gillis, who was practically a member of her family, and the only woman member on board; and of course Mrs. Gillis, being human, would tell the teacher and the doctor. These three would watch for every sign of emotion, sad or mad or bad—there could hardly be any glad, for that would have been indecent. The three observers would meet in one another's cabins and fan themselves with a breeze of gossip. Just how red were Lizbeth's eyes, and just how far was her nose out of joint? And what could be the matter with the amiable Mr. Budd that he didn't fall in love with any of the three eligible ladies on board? Did he perhaps have a broken heart? Or a lady love in one of the numerous capitals of Europe which he visited? Or possibly more than one, for, after all, morals there are not exactly repressive. And as for Cousin Laurel, was she in love with him, or with whom, and what was this mysterious manuscript which she kept so carefully locked up in her steamer trunk? The Filipino boy who did the cleaning avowed that he had never had a glimpse of a single page of it.

When there are only seven guests on a yacht, only two of them males—and one of these an elderly valetudinarian self-excluded from the primrose path of dalliance—there really isn't much food for gossip, and it is up to the ladies to make the most of what a kind Providence may afford.

## 23

### *Smoke of Their Torment*

#### I

ALL the way from Baltimore to Miami to Panama, and from there westward, people had been talking to Reverdy Holdenhurst about Japan. They considered it injudicious of him to venture where there was so much danger. Why couldn't he winter in some of the many

places that were safe? When he asked them where, they would say, well, Florida, or Arizona, or New Mexico. This to a man who owned a beautiful yacht, and loved it, and was bound to get his money's worth out of it!

Reverdy had always had his own way, ever since he could remember, and as a result he was a stubborn character; he made up his mind what he wanted to do and then he did it. He had taken this cruise year after year; he knew the places, and had friends in each and paid them duty calls. Just so in the old days fashionable ladies had ridden in two-horse carriages in state with coachman and footman, leaving "calling cards" at one house after another. Reverdy felt that he had abandoned one-half of the world at the behest of the Fuhrer and Il Duce; he didn't feel like abandoning the other half for the Emperor of Japan.

He discussed the subject now and then during the cruise. The Japs had got themselves tied up in China, and were having no easy time of it; was it likely that they would wish to take on the might of the British Empire and the United States? Surely not until they had made their position in China secure; and had developed their sources of supply! Reverdy had visited Japan more than once, and had talked with leading statesmen; he knew them to be shrewd observers of the world scene, well able to weigh the forces they would face if they challenged the Anglo-Saxon peoples. Certainly they weren't going to begin by interfering with a harmless private yacht, whose manifest and storerooms they were free to examine at any time. Reverdy possessed letters from Japanese personages in which these polite gentlemen expressed their high regard, and he kept these in a pigeon-hole of his desk, on the off-chance that some Japanese lieutenant might some day step aboard from a vessel of war.

In Manila the warnings of Reverdy's acquaintances had become vigorous. What, going into Hong-Kong when you didn't have to, and when everybody that could get out had done so? Didn't the skipper of the *Oriole* know that all American women had been ordered out, and all British women who didn't have urgent duties? Reverdy said: yes, he knew, and he had no intention of staying in Hong-Kong. All he ~~was~~ planning to do was to put ashore a woman doctor whose father was a physician in the interior and who wished to rejoin him.

"But what an idea!" exclaimed the advisers. "Don't you know the Japanese lines are drawn tightly all the way around the Hong-Kong territory? Nobody can get into the interior from there!"

Reverdy smiled a tolerant smile. "My woman doctor knows the situation well. The Japs have been there for three years or more, and there are plenty of ways of getting past them. You get a launch or a sampan and go up the coast a short distance at night and land in



some cove; there are Chinese guerillas who take you in charge and escort you wherever you want to go. Especially if you are a doctor, willing to help their people—they take care of their friends."

The Baltimore capitalist had influence, and had been able to get the passports for this trip. It was still a free country, he said, and added, slyly: "If you know the right persons!" There was nobody in Manila charged with the duty of preventing a yacht owner from sailing the high seas. Reverdy discussed the matter with his guests and assured them that the stay would be very brief; while on shore they must keep in touch with the yacht and be ready to leave at any sign of trouble. He would replenish the fuel and attend to a couple of business matters, and then they would be off to the south-west, all the way to Bali and Java, where the Japanese would surely not venture—unless they were prepared to commit suicide.

"If I were a betting man," said this knowledgeable host, "I would offer ten to one that if the Japs are planning to strike at any place, it will be Vladivostok and the railway north of Manchoukuo. There is their real enemy, and believe me, they have the sense to know it."

## II

Lanny listened to these discussions, and walked the deck and pondered them. Prominent in his thoughts was the old sentence spoken to him in Munich: "You will die in Hong-Kong." The P.A. had told himself that astrology was a pseudo-science which had been long since discarded; but that hadn't kept him from remembering the warning. He was like a man who watches a thunderstorm gathering, sees the lightning on the horizon, and wonders what the chances are of being hit.

He might have gone to his host and said: "Reverdy, I don't think it prudent to take these ladies into a danger spot. Why not approach the coast a bit farther north, behind the Jap lines, and use the launch to put Althea in the cove where she wants to be?" The host would have acceded to this suggestion, especially if the doctor herself had supported it.

But Althea had promised to introduce Lanny to Madame Sun Yat-sen, and that was something he looked forward to. Moreover, he was really curious about the prediction. An old-time psychic researcher, he took it as a challenge and would have been ashamed to run away from it. One more chance to find out if precognition is a possibility! Plain curiosity played a part in this; he wanted to know what, if anything, was supposed to happen here. This characteristic is one which humans share with many of the animals. A bear moving

along a trail and hearing a strange noise ahead will not delay for a second; he will swing off the trail and get away from there both quickly and silently. But a deer, hearing the same sound, will stop, prick up its ears, and peer in the direction of the sound; if it is a man standing on his head and kicking his legs in the air, the deer will come nearer, trying to make out the meaning of the strange phenomenon. That is one reason why the death-rate of deer is so much higher than that of bears.

### III

Hong-Kong is an island of granite hills, eleven miles long, lying in the entrance to a deep indentation that might be called an estuary or a gulf. A hundred years ago the island had been the haunt of pirates; the British had taken it, as a place where they could carry on trade and be safe from the exactions of local government. Now it was a "crown colony," called "the Gibraltar of the Far East," and was one of the centres of the world's trade. Even the fact that the Japanese had seized Canton, eighty miles distant up the river, hadn't stopped the activities of the port; for the new conquerors had to have supplies, and they were even willing for the Chinese in the interior to have supplies, provided that "squeeze" was distributed to the right Japanese officials.

The British territory included all the shores of the harbour, and the country around it for a distance of twenty or thirty miles. In this district lived some fifteen thousand white people and perhaps a hundred times as many Chinese; it was hard to say exactly, for they kept coming and going. During the four years of the Japanese invasion they had been coming, and the British had had to put them to work constructing mass shelters. Across the harbour from the island was a peninsula called Kowloon, and the refugees had filled this, and spread out into the rice fields and vegetable gardens beyond. In the harbour they lived on board sampans and junks, making a floating slum. Reverdy said you could never have any idea what poverty was until you saw China; there and in India you learned to think of human beings as of maggots in a carcass, and for the first time you realized how completely civilization depends upon the practice of birth control.

The harbour is long and narrow. The *Oriole* came in slowly, through a swarm of junks and other native craft of every shape and size: wonderful, picturesque, with sails of brown and yellow tints, patched to the very edges, over and over; steered usually by a woman or girl with a long pole, skilfully turning the craft out of the yacht's course. The good humour of the sailors and their women was delight-

ful; when they came close to the yacht the passengers would throw coins and the natives would catch them in a little net at the end of a long pole. They were very skilful and hardly ever missed. The *Oriole* found a safe anchorage. Owing to governmental red tape, there would be delay in the fuelling, and meantime the passengers went ashore in the launch. They found themselves in a modern city with luxury hotels, department stores, theatres, banks—everything they would have found in London or New York. The white residents were wealthy—why else would they have stayed here? The merchants had built themselves villas on a high hill called "the Peak"; they were crowded together and could not have so much in the way of gardens, but there was a sea breeze and they could be more comfortable in summer. In December it was cool and the men wore sweaters and tweeds.

The visitors were rolled around in easy chairs on rubber-tired wheels called rickshaws; the Chinese who pulled them were called "boys," although they were men and looked much older than they were. It was a job which wore them out quickly and when they developed varicose veins and couldn't run any more, nobody knew what became of them and few thought to inquire. Overpopulation had its unpleasant features, but also its conveniences, there were plenty of servants, and your "Number One Boy" who ran your household ruled them with a rod of iron. The "old China hands" who had lived here since the days of the Empire took everything for granted, and laughed you down if you talked about improving anything in this part of the world. East was East, and so on. All their troubles went back to the missionaries, who had started the business of "educating these beggars" and talking to them about "reform"; as a result, all China was in chaos, and of course the Japs were taking it over—what could you expect?

## IV

A person like Dr. Althea Carroll would hardly have been appreciated by the hard-boiled plutocracy of Hong-Kong, whether British or American. Lanny and Cousin Laurel would have been welcome, but they had chosen to give their time to the widow of China's revolutionary saint. Reverdy was an old friend of the recently appointed governor, and when he telephoned of his arrival he received an invitation to dine at Government House. That included his daughter, and it might have included his niece and the son of Budd-Erling Aircraft if Reverdy had dropped a hint about them, but he didn't.

Lanny was well content to have it that way, for he had dined in many official residences and knew what dull affairs they could be.

Whatever Sir Mark Aitchison Young might have to report about the political and military situation, Reverdy would retail it during the trip to Bali; and meantime Althea would get busy and arrange for the call upon Madame Sun that evening. Lanny and Laurel would be free to do what they hadn't been able to do in Berlin or Berne, in Cannes or London or New York—to wander about the streets and look at the sights to their hearts' content.

What interested them was the Chinese quarter—or perhaps one should call it the Chinese ninety-nine-hundredths. The hills were steep, and looking down the narrow canyons you saw vistas of the bay and the hills on the far side. The streets and sidewalks were swarming with push-carts and stands, not to mention men, women, and children, so that it was difficult for even a rickshaw to get through. Most of the shops were open to the streets, and behind them were living quarters—dens might have been a better word. Behind the tourists followed starveling children, whining a sing-song. Long ago somebody must have taught it to them for a joke, but they would never know it as such; for the rest of Hong-Kong time they would chant: “No mammy, no pappy, no whisky-soda!”

The pair stood on the esplanade called “the Bund,” watching a Chinese funeral go by. It was a long affair, entirely pedestrian. The coffin was borne by pall-bearers, who worked in relays, and the idle four of them chewed some sort of seeds, and spat frequently and made jokes with the spectators. Many of the mourners were barefoot; they had been hired, and some of them carried large bedraggled banners, rented for the occasion. Women mourners bore a sort of stretcher loaded with paper flowers. There were many hands wearing faded uniforms, and making loud noises which had no relation to music in Western ears. The oddest feature of this long procession was people with large wads of raw cotton hanging over their heads and bumping against their cheeks; other mourners kept poking at these wads with dirty cloths, and who could guess what that was supposed to signify? When they asked Althea she explained that the wads represented tears of grief, and the extra mourners were wiping them away.

v

The doctor joined them, and they had dinner in one of the restaurants patronized by the well-to-do Chinese, of which there was a large group on the island. Here, as everywhere, there was abundance for those who had the money. Althea had arranged for them to go that evening to call upon Madame Sun, and she spent the meal-time telling them about this remarkable lady, and about the Chinese silk

merchant, Mr. Foo Sung, who was coming in his car to fetch them to the lady's home.

Dr. Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Chinese Republic, had been the son of a poor farmer; he had been educated in a Christian school, and had devoted his life to teaching ideas of freedom and social justice to his people. He had spent a good part of his life in exile, a fugitive from the various warlords who ruled the Flowery Kingdom. He had travelled to America and to Britain, getting support of the Chinese there for the Kuomintang, the Republican party. He had organized the revolution which had overthrown the Manchu Empire, and had laid down a sort of political charter for the future of his countrymen.

The "Three People's Principles" were, first, Nationalism, which meant freedom and independence for all Chinese; second, Democracy, which meant government by the will of the people; and third, Socialism, which meant the production and distribution of goods for use and not for private profit. Needless to say, Dr. Sun had not lived to see these principles put into effect among his four hundred million countrymen; but his ideals were cherished and taught by clear-visioned souls, not merely in China but elsewhere throughout a tormented world.

There were three ladies of China known as the Soong sisters, daughters of the wealthiest banking family in the country, all three of them Christians educated in American colleges. The best known of them, Mei-ling, was the wife of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek; the second, Ai-ling, was married to Finance Minister Kung of the government; the third, Ching-ling, had become the secretary of Sun Yat-sen and had married him in his later years. She had imbibed his doctrines, and although she had been sixteen years a widow, she still made them the guiding light of her life. The Kuomintang had become a political machine, and had made its terms with the wealthy exploiters—or so, at any rate, Ching-Ling believed. She was the "radical" of the Soong family, the "parlour Pink." Lanny, who had played that same uncomfortable role in his youth, could sympathize with her position; but since he had not yet decided what he was going to do with the rest of his life, he continued wearing his camouflage of art expert, a non-political personality.

## VI

Mr. Foo Sung called for them at the restaurant with his limousine. He was an elderly gentleman wearing a long white goatee, gold-rimmed spectacles, and a Chinese costume of black silk; he was very dignified, very courteous, and informed about art both Oriental and Western; he spoke English, not perfectly, but easily to be understood.

After he had listened for a while to Lanny's polished discourse, he invited the visitor to inspect his own collection and give him an opinion as to the genuineness of a Holbein for which he was thinking of making an offer. Lanny said that Holbeins were mostly in museums, and the likelihood of one turning up in Hong-Kong seemed slight. Mr. Foo replied: "I have, what you say, pedigree for him." Lanny promised to see what he could do on the morrow.

Madame Sun lived in Kowloon, the city on the mainland across the bay; you went on a little green-painted ferryboat, and there was time for cultured conversation. Mr. Foo, one of those rare persons of wealth who rise above their class interests and are willing to take their chances in a democratic world, was a great admirer of the lady they were going to visit. Lanny wondered: would he have admired her so much if she had not been a member of the richest family of the country? Human motives are mixed, at any rate as Lanny had observed them in the Western world, and he guessed that this might be true of the still more ancient Orient.

The widow of China's George Washington lived in an unpretentious Western-style cottage in the suburbs. She was a small, frail person in her fifties, looking surprisingly like her more famous sister whose picture Lanny had seen in the papers. She wore a close-fitting gown of light blue, and her black hair was pulled back from her forehead and formed a knot in back; she wore no jewels. Her English was excellent, her manner smiling and serene. She was tireless in serving on committees for the aid of war refugees, orphans, and workers' co-operatives.

She assumed that these visitors had come because they wished to understand the problems of China, and she talked about them freely. She did not mention any of the other members of her family, but pointed out what she believed were the errors of the regime. Of course it was necessary to expel the Japanese invaders, and to do that China had to have order and discipline; but not even war could suppress the struggle between the people's interests and those of the exploiters. Even in wartime profits would be made; and who was to get them, the speculators and great monopolists, or the co-operatives, which had shown so well their ability to produce the necessities of both war and peace? The co-operatives were now being stifled by the Chungking government, and worse yet was the blockade against "Red" China; even the medical supplies donated by America were not allowed to cross the line. When a political party which had been formed for the purpose of building up the people's power changed gradually into a group of politicians selling the privileges of government to the highest bidder, it became necessary to make that fact known and to keep it before the people.

Lanny, lover of peace, asked what she thought could be done about the problem of Japan. The reply was that it was the same problem as in China; the great families made use of both militarists and statesmen to increase their wealth and strengthen their hold upon the people's means of life. The people did not want wars; the people were willing to work and produce, and asked only to retain the fruit of their labour. But those who exploited labour had to increase their holdings, to protect themselves against rival groups; they had to find markets abroad, because the masses at home did not have the money to buy the products of industry. "Our hope lies in the co-operatives, Mr. Budd, and in the co-operative method of production and distribution."

Lanny would have liked to say: "I agree with you entirely." But with the caution which had become second nature, he told her "What you say is extremely interesting, and I promise that I will investigate the subject."

The "Pink" lady replied: "There is a great co-operative movement in your own country, but it is an unfashionable affair, an achievement of the plain people, and it probably does not get the headlines very often in your capitalist press."

## VII

Lanny had promised to keep in touch with the yacht, and he had left word where he and the two ladies were to spend that evening. Now the telephone rang and it was Reverdy, asking if he might speak to Mr. Budd. "I thought you would want to know that we are to leave the first thing in the morning. Sir Mark takes a very serious view of the situation and does not think that any vessel having women on board should remain here. He tells me that the Japs have just doubled their forces in Indo-China, and also that a battle-fleet has been observed near their mandated islands, very close to where we passed. Sir Mark thinks they are contemplating some move against British positions. He has arranged for us to have a special permit to get fuel to-morrow morning."

"O.K. by me," Lanny replied. "Our party will be leaving for the yacht within an hour or so."

"I'll be staying a while longer with the Governor. Lizbeth has gone with one of his aides to a dance at the Peninsular Hotel, which is in Kowloon. You might go there and join her, if you like. She is being taken in a government launch, and you three can be brought to the yacht in that."

"I'll ask the others," said Lanny, "but my guess is they'll prefer

to return as we came. We have been sightseeing all day, and you know it's usually pretty late before those dances break up. And besides, we aren't dressed."

"As you please," replied Reverdy. "Be sure you reach the yacht by daylight."

Lanny reported this to the company, and they discussed the Governor's information. Mr. Foo declared it was difficult to forecast the actions of the Japanese, because the Army and the Navy were separate groups, and independent to an extent unimaginable in Western lands; they did not always tell the government what they were planning, and sometimes they didn't even tell each other. The great Kwantung Army undoubtedly wanted to cut the Trans-Siberian railway and squeeze the Russians out of Eastern Asia; the Navy undoubtedly wanted to get hold of the Dutch East Indies, with their fabulous wealth of rubber and oil and tin. Why they should be reinforcing their troops in Indo-China was hard to imagine, unless they were aiming an attack upon Singapore. Why they should send a battle-fleet to their mandated islands so far to the east was even harder to explain—unless they were mad enough to be contemplating a raid upon Australia.

So it was that amateur strategists speculated and debated, not merely in Hong-Kong but in every spot on land and sea where there was a radio set and people to turn the dials. That Saturday night was Friday on the other side of the world; it was December 5 in "the States," and December 6 in Hong-Kong and Manila. Everywhere there were groups of sober-minded people asking with fear what was going to become of their world; and everywhere there were larger groups of light-minded people and the young, dancing to the pounding of drums, the moaning of saxophones, and the blaring of stopped trumpets.

#### VII

Laurel, always tactful, suggested that they might be keeping their hostess too long, but Madame Sun said that she was enjoying their company. When Lanny mentioned the dance at the hotel, Mr. Foo remarked that it was being given for the benefit of the Chinese-British Bomber Fund, and he thought it might be a good thing if Ching-Ling were to show herself there, if only for a few minutes. Madame assented, saying: "I have to keep in touch with my rich friends. I am able to shame many of them into giving for our causes."

She excused herself for a few minutes, and came back wearing a handsome Mandarin gown of black silk with embroidery of gold. There was plenty of time, Mr. Foo assured them, and they drove to the



Peninsular Hotel, an immense structure facing Hong-Kong about a mile across the bay. The Chinese city surrounded it, with shopping streets built with arcades, so that you could walk for a mile or two sheltered from sun and rain. The streets were so crowded that it was hard to walk there at all, but a skilful Chinese chauffeur was able to deliver them to the hotel, and they went up to the second floor, where two great ballrooms were thronged with dancers.

Hong-Kong was proud of its social life, and made it a point of prestige to continue it in spite of all opposition, whether of Nature or man. The fact that there were fifty thousand Japanese troops forming a semicircle about the territory, as close at some points as fifteen miles, was no reason why smart society should give up breakfast parties followed by horseback rides, luncheons followed by sailing parties or bridge, dinners followed by dances. Then, too, there was the horse racing at the Happy Valley track; and between all the other doings there were whisky-sodas! To have given up any of all this would have been to lose face with one's Chinese allies, and with the servants. News spread with the speed of lightning in the crowded arcades, and when in this region you had lost face you had nothing left. Hong-Kong, Gibraltar of the Far East, must never know fear!

Madame Sun went in, and her friends crowded about her. The three Americans, not being properly costumed, stood in the doorway for a few minutes, watching the picturesque scene. Many of the men were in uniform, British or Chinese; many of the ladies wore costumes which were a compromise between the styles of the two countries. The Chinese girls wore their hair loose; it was slick and shiny, and floated behind them in black cascades. War was coming, and this might be their last chance of happiness. Lanny thought about the ball in Brussels on the night before the battle of Waterloo and which he had read about in *Vanity Fair*. To the American observer the strangest thing was to see British and Chinese dancing to that music which was called "modern," and which had come out of the jungles of Africa and been refashioned in the dives of Mississippi river towns and of New York's Harlem.

Lanny observed the daughter of the Holdenhursts dancing in the arms of a tall young man in a British Army lieutenant's uniform. He was handsome and blond, with a trim little moustache. Lizbeth bore every sign of being happy, and Lanny thought perhaps this would be the great romance of her life; this gallant warrior would whisper into her ear, and promise to come to Green Spring Valley when the war was over; if this were so, the rest of the cruise of the *Oriole* would be happier for the son of Budd-Erling. He did not know whether she saw him now, and took care not to intrude upon her dream.

On with the dance! Mr. Foo invited them to have supper in the

hotel dining-room, and when they were through it was midnight. They went upstairs for a final glimpse of the dancers, and to say good-bye to Madame Sun. As they stood in the doorway the music stopped suddenly, and there was a man standing in the balcony, calling for silence. Later on they learned that he was Mr. Wilson, head of the President Line of steamships and a prominent figure socially. He waved a megaphone, and when he got silence he spoke: "All men connected with ships in the harbour report on board *at once*. All men belonging to the reserve report for duty *at once*."

So that was the end of the festivities. There were very few white men in Hong-Kong who didn't belong to one or the other of these categories, and they faded suddenly out of the picture, leaving the women to gather in little groups, pale in spite of their war paint. There was only one thing it could possibly mean—the Japanese enemy. Where was he, and what was he doing or threatening? Mr. Foo said: "Madame will know," and went to ask her. She, as sister-in-law of the "Gissimo," would have the right to share military secrets; and presently the elderly merchant came back and reported: "Big fleet Japanese ships near. All ships in port ordered leave to-night or next night. Very bad situation. You go to yacht quick."

## IX

That was indeed a serious matter, and they wasted no time in discussion. Madame Sun would be taken home by other friends. Mr. Foo would take the three passengers in his car. Dr. Carrol, who was not going on the yacht, would spend the night at Mr. Foo's home. They hurried down to the front of the hotel, where a press of people were calling for their cars, for taxis or rickshaws. After some delay they found their host's car, and made their way to the Star ferry, as it was called. There they found a long line of cars waiting. Mr. Foo said: "We never able to get car on board next boat. You walk more quick. Other side, you get taxi."

That was obviously good advice, so Lanny and Laurel said a brief farewell to the other two. "Some day you come again," said the elderly Chinese, and the doctor promised to write to Lanny at Newcastle when possible. They hurried to join the waiting crowd, getting close to the front, and when the ferry came in they crowded on board. A heavy fog had drifted over the harbour, something common at this season; foghorns and whistles sounded from near and far, and the little green boat crept ahead with caution.

It would be a good night for escaping, if a vessel could find its way out to sea, everybody agreed. There were ship's officers here who

meant to try it; they talked freely—the presence of danger broke down the customary reticence. Information was scarce but speculation plentiful. All seemed to agree that Hong-Kong could withstand a long siege, but the business of ships was at sea and not locked up in any harbour. Among the landmen, every one had his post; if any one of them had a doubt or a fear he kept it in his heart.

In a time like this it was natural for the men to assume that their jobs were more important; they rushed off the boat and grabbed all the waiting taxis and rickshaws, and Lanny, whose legs still had to be treated carefully, walked off with his lady and found the street bare. They started along the waterfront, and it was some time before they were able to find one rickshaw and then a second. At long last they got to the pier where the launch of the *Oriole* was to be, but there was no launch. With sinking hearts they made certain, and then seated themselves to wait. Lanny said: "Perhaps the launch is taking Reverdy to the yacht." Laurel's reply was: "Would he have stayed this late with the Governor?" It really didn't seem plausible.

They sat gazing out into the fog, so heavy that they could not see a light the distance of a city block. The air resounded with the horns and whistles of ships; evidently there was much movement going on, but those on shore could only guess about it. Laurel asked: "Do you suppose the launch would have trouble in finding this pier?"

"They couldn't very well miss the whole waterfront," was the reply. "When they step ashore they can find out where they are, and would surely send somebody here for us."

They debated the idea of going out to search for the yacht at her anchorage. They could hire a sampan or rowboat, but it would be extremely dangerous in this fog, and once out of sight of the dock they would be lost. They would have little chance of finding the yacht, and afterwards would have still less of getting back to the same spot. They had precise instructions; this was the place, and there was no chance of mistaking it; if they went off looking elsewhere, the launch might come and miss them. Reverdy had given them until daylight, and that was a long time off.

X

There was nothing to do but sit still. Fortunately it was warm. The busy labour of the Chinese docks went on by night as by day, in war as in peace; a ship was being loaded farther out on the pier, and trucks rolled by them, piled high with boxes and sacks. "Trucks," in a Chinese port, did not mean motor vehicles; it meant a low platform on wheels, hauled by perhaps a dozen men with straps across their shoulders. You saw them going uphill and down in Hong-Kong

streets. Here on the pier none of these sweating labourers paid the slightest attention to a white "missie" and her man.

There was only one subject to talk about, and they had already said everything—except one thing which was too painful to be voiced. But as the slow hours dragged by Lanny became fixed in his conviction, and finally he said: "I am afraid the *Oriole* has departed. We are not going to see her again—at least not in Hong-Kong."

"Oh, Lanny, such a dreadful idea!" exclaimed Laurel. "I can't bring myself to face it."

"How else can you figure it? Lizbeth was with a member of the Governor's staff at the dance. Is it conceivable that when an alarm was given, a staff member wasn't the first to be told? They had a government launch and they bolted for it, and of course their first job was to deliver Lizbeth to the yacht—they must have agreed to do that when they borrowed her. And Reverdy was due to be there—he surely wasn't going to sit chatting with Sir Mark a minute after the alarm came. It wouldn't take him more than a few minutes to get from Government House to this spot, and he would find the launch here, but no Lanny and no Laurel. What would he do?"

"I suppose he would fume and fret for a while, but then he would be taken out to the yacht."

"He would find Lizbeth on board, or she would arrive soon afterwards; and then what? Let us say that he sends the launch in again—no simple matter in this fog. Would he possibly fail to put a time limit on it?"

"It would be a dreadful decision to have to make, Lanny."

"He would say: 'I give them one hour. If they aren't there by that time, it's their hard luck.'"

Laurel had to find some excuse for her uncle, even in this imaginary scene. "He would have to think of the other people on board, the crew as well as the passengers."

"Do you really think he would think about that, Laurel?"

This brought her up short, and she hesitated. "I think he would think that he was thinking about it—if that is not too complicated."

"I am guessing, of course. He may have been told by the Governor that this fog offers him his one chance to get out, and that every minute he waits he is reducing that chance. My guess is, he has weighed anchor, and the *Oriole's* siren is one of those sounds we are hearing, though we can't recognize it."

Every minute that passed brought this theory more to the fore. The only argument to oppose it was that Uncle Reverdy was a Southern gentleman, and wouldn't desert a lady, especially one who was a member of his own family. Laurel suggested that the fog was so bad and the night traffic so thick he dared not send the launch ashore until

daylight. Possibly he himself had gone to the Hong-Kong Hotel for the night. Possibly he had been told that the cruiser and the destroyer in the harbour would convoy a fleet of vessels out by daylight.

"Possibly, but surely not probably!" was Lanny's reply. "The Japs have an airport at Canton, and if they mean trouble they may go to work at dawn this Sunday morning."

Nothing to do but sit and wait! He asked if she didn't want to take a nap, but she answered that she was too keyed up. He asked whether she was worried about the loss of her manuscript; she relieved his mind on that point by telling him that in Manila she had mailed a copy to her friend in New York. He wanted to know if it hurt her to talk about the idea of her uncle going off and leaving her; to this she replied: "I try to see it from his point of view. If he had to weigh Lizbeth's safety against mine, naturally he would favour hers."

"What I am wondering is how much our recent misconduct would weigh against us in the balance."

"Oh, Lanny! Surely not that!"

"I won't talk about you, since it might be painful. But consider my standing." There was a smile in Lanny's voice—he didn't mean to give up smiling, even in darkness and danger. "I was his prospective son-in-law, and I rejected the honour, and in a particularly inconsiderate way. I came aboard the yacht under false pretences, I wrote to my lady friend, telling her that I was coming. Of course Reverdy wouldn't know whether I suggested your coming, or whether that was your own bright idea. Most probably he suspects it was a conspiracy between us, and that I decided to come with the idea of enjoying the pleasure of your society. Certainly I had been keeping from him and his family the fact that I had known his niece for three years or so, and that she had been a guest in my mother's home. Don't you think that in view of all this, there might be a strong tendency to say: 'All right, they wanted to be together, and now they have it, and don't have us to bother them'?"

"Lanny, that is a horrid thought. I simply won't face it!"

"All right; and maybe when the fog lifts, and we see the trim white *Oriole* resting at anchor, I'll be ashamed of having said it. We'll tell ourselves that all this is a nightmare, and it will be very romantic that we sat out all night on a Hong-Kong dock with coolies stumbling over our feet!"

## XI

There was a subject of conversation which had been in his mind ever since Reverdy's telephone call. "Laurel," he said, "do you remember what I once told you, about an astrologer who predicted that I was going to die in Hong-Kong?"

"Indeed, yes," she answered. "I wondered if you had forgotten it."

"I have thought about it off and on. I wanted very much to try a séance with you and see if anything came. It was one thing which made me so impatient on the *Oriole*—that there was no way we could arrange it."

"It is silly of me, Lanny, but I begin to tremble every time I think of that prophecy. Of course I tell myself there cannot possibly be anything to astrology."

"There is nothing to astrology, but there might easily be something to an astrologer; he might be a medium, and have some psychic gift, no more to be understood than your own. That young Rumanian held my hand, and I asked him why he did it; he said he didn't know, he sometimes got things that way. I just don't know whether there is such a thing as the power called precognition, but there seems to be a lot of evidence for it, and I keep an open mind about it, in spite of what anybody says. If I'm going to die in Hong-Kong, I may know it a few minutes ahead of time, and that will interest me greatly."

"Don't joke, Lanny! I am so deeply concerned."

"I'm not joking. We all have to die some time, and we might as well learn to take it with an easy mind. Death is as much a part of our being as birth, and one seems to me as odd and unbelievable as the other."

"I don't want to die and I don't want you to die; we both have too much to do. Most of all I am horrified by the idea that if you were to die, the blame would rest on my uncle."

"If I were you I wouldn't worry over that, Laurel. I have been thinking the problem over in the last few hours, and I tell you that if I had the free choice at this moment, to be in his position or my own, I'd choose to be here."

"You think the yacht is in that great danger?"

"We get certain thought patterns and find it impossible to change them, even when we consciously try. As far back as men have been going to sea, they have had the certainty that if they could get beyond the horizon, they were safe from a pursuer. Now they forget that the Japs have planes, and carriers, and long-range bombers, to say nothing of submarines. If the Japs are going to attack this port, they will know perfectly well that ships will be stealing out to-night, and they will have made plans accordingly."

"What a hideous idea—the *Oriole* being sunk!"

"They might sink her, and again they might have use for her; put a crew on board and take her to Formosa."

"What would they do with the passengers and crew?"

"Intern them, I suppose. On the other hand, if they haven't time or the men to spare, they might sink her with one shell. What I am

saying is, if I had to choose, I believe I would stay in Hong-Kong—it fact I thought of suggesting to you that we should refuse to go on the launch. In the first place Hong-Kong may hold out, and the siege may be relieved; in the second place, we may find a way to escape with Althea, and have a chance to see Free China. Surely a lot of people are going to get out, by one route or another; and she and Mr. Fox and Madame Sun will know as much about the routes and the disguises as anybody in this place. So if you have any impulse to despair, take my advice and don't!"

The woman said: "I am thinking about Lizbeth, and the awful things that may be happening to her!"

## XII

Dawn came as a slow diffusion of light through the fog. First it was possible to see that it was fog; then it was possible to see that it was moving slowly, broken by light breezes; presently there were clear stretches of water, with a patch of sail revealed, then hidden again. The two watchers strained their eyes toward where the yacht had been, and little by little increased their certainty that the place was empty. There were glimpses of the opposite shore with its hills; there were freighters at anchor and many small boats moving; but no trim white *Oriole*.

It was possible that the yacht had been moved to the refuelling depot; but surely some messenger would have come to this pier where the guests were waiting. They debated these ideas until it was broad daylight, and they could see the whole harbour, with many ships— but fewer than on the previous day. This was the time when the Jap planes would come, if they were coming that Sunday morning, but they did not show up, and the stranded pair wondered, could it have been a false alarm? Could the enemy fleet that had been sighted be bringing merely normal supplies for the troops in Canton, or farther south, in Indo-China?

The sun was well up in the sky before they decided that there was no longer any use sitting on the bulwark of a pier. They had agreed that their next move was to get in touch with Althea, for she might be leaving at any time and they would depend on her advice. Lanny got rickshaws, and they were taken to the nearest hotel—not the fashionable Hong-Kong, because Laurel declared she looked too seedy. The hotel was crowded, so she sat in the lobby while he went to the telephone.

There were several Foo Sungs in the book, but the hotel clerk could tell which was the wealthy and well-known silk merchant. Lanny

called, and a voice answered in Chinese. All Lanny could say in that language was "Doctor Carroll," and this he kept repeating until at last he heard the voice of his friend. When he told her what had happened, she cried out in dismay, then said: "Please wait. I will speak to Mr. Foo." Coming back, she reported: "Mr. Foo begs you to come to his house. It will be a great honour. He will send his car at once." Lanny accepted for both of them, with due gratitude.

The place was in the centre of the island, reached by a winding road through the hills. The home of a well-to-do Chinese is always a compound; you enter by high much-carved gates, and there is a central area, large or small, and buildings completely enclosing it—buildings with far-hanging, curved roofs. There are stables and pens for various animals, and quarters for many servants; if the master is rich, there is a wall separating all this from the residential part; if he has become wholly or partly westernized, he has a Chinese and a Western wing of his house, each in its proper style.

That was the way with Mr. Foo; his drawing-room might have been in Grosvenor Square or on Park Avenue, and when he escorted Lanny to a bedroom, there were classical Poussins on the walls, and lovely figure pieces by Corot. Lanny found this surprising, but he reflected that an elderly Chinese would have the same interest in scenes of the *ancien régime* that a wealthy Frenchman would have in scenes of the Ming dynasty. In costumes and architecture these periods were different, but in their inner essence, the psychology of the ruling class, they were much the same.

The courteous host informed them that this would be their home for as long as they cared to stay. They had breakfasted at the hotel while waiting for the car, so now he suggested that they should sleep, and later they would have a conference. Meantime, through connections in the city he would make certain that the yacht was no longer in the harbour; also he would learn what he could about the alarm of last night and what it meant. He assured them that there was no need for haste; the monkey men—so he called the foes of his country—were assuredly not going to break into Hong-Kong in the next few days, and there would be plenty of time to work out plans. That was comforting, and Lanny slept soundly on a good spring mattress.

In the late afternoon, when the promised conference took place, the elderly Chinese reported that the *Oriole* had undoubtedly departed although of course she had not been seen in the fog. Many ships had stolen out, and a large convoy was to leave this night. What happened to the yacht would not be known for some time, since assuredly she



would not use her wireless until she was far away. A Japanese convoy including various warships, was approaching the harbour of Hong-Kong. It was probably bringing reinforcements, and what these were for—anybody's guess—an advance into the interior, or an attack upon the port. "We soon know," said Mr. Foo.

Althea was eager to persuade them to travel with her and visit her parents at the mission, which was in the province of Hunan. They would see this ancient land, and they could get a commercial plane to Chungking, from which capital they could be flown out to India, and then from there home. But first they would have to wait and see what the Jap convoy was up to; their way of escape lay across its path, and they must give it time to get out of the way. Lanny would do more walking and strengthen his legs; also he would look at paintings!

The art expert was surprised to find in this home a dozen or more examples of English and French painters, mostly portraits. The merchant had travelled, and he had not taken the word of dealers who had bought what pleased him. Like *Der Dicke*, his taste ran to lacquer, but, unlike the roistering Nazi, he insisted upon having them clothed. No decent Chinese would have had naked women in his drawing-room, even painted ones. In the dining-room he had a Whistler, and in his breakfast nook, very oddly, several Gibson girls, tall and tightly corseted. Lanny asked about the Holbein, but that was in the cellar, and no doubt would be hidden now. The visitors were destined not to see it.

Later on the host took his friend into the Chinese part of his home where he had a series of landscapes of Tibet by the Russian Nicholas Roerich. There, also, he brought forward what he called his Nunn. One wife, an elderly wizened figure as different from a Gibson girl as could be found on earth. She had had her feet bound in infancy and hobbled on two stumps; she did not know any English, but bowed and smiled like one of those tiny figures of mandarins which are made with a round base and a weight in it so that they cannot be upset when you go on bobbing when you touch them. She had learned Lanny's name and said it several times as if proud of the accomplishment. "My Budd! Mista Budd!"

#### XIV

In the course of the evening the guest found a chance to say to Laurel: "Is there any reason why Althea and Mr. Foo should not witness a séance?" She thought for a moment and said that she had no objection. So Lanny told them about this strange faculty which Laurel had discovered in Germany, but didn't say she had made her discovery in Adolf Hitler's Berchtesgaden retreat!

Lanny outlined the procedure, and was interested to observe the reaction of these two friends from opposite sides of the world. The woman doctor had never taken psychic research seriously, and was not to be influenced by the fact that the Bible is full of such phenomena; that was far in the past, and belonged in the field of religion, not open to experiment, and apparently never to be repeated—until, perhaps, the Second Coming. Mr. Foo said that all Chinese were taught that the spirits of their ancestors survived and exercised a guardian influence, but among westernized Chinese the idea was allowed to recede into the background of the mind. However, he had no prejudices against it, and there are few persons who would reject the idea of a free show, right in their own drawing-room.

Laurel lay back on a couch and drifted into her strange trance, and Lanny sat by with notebook and pencil. Presently there came a gentle murmur, which said it was the voice of the late Otto H. Kahn. But it wasn't a very convincing Otto; he seemed to be out of sorts, perhaps bewildered by a strange environment. Some day, perhaps, the scientists will know how to manage these subconscious forces, but until that time psychic research remains an uncertain and frequently vexatious task. The spirits in the vasty deep refuse to come when you do call to them; they choose their own time, and just when you have invited your friends and are most anxious for results they absent themselves, or misbehave and embarrass you greatly.

Perhaps it is the psychic atmosphere that is wrong; they require faith and love, and do not respond to a cold scientific attitude. The ideal master of ceremonies, as Lanny had observed, was Parsifal Dingle, who never had the least doubt that every spirit was exactly what he or she claimed to be; he talked to them with warm friendship, and they blossomed out and revealed their inmost secrets. But with Lanny it was "that old telepathy." He kept wondering, and in his secret soul trying to reduce these shadowy beings to the low status of subconscious automatisms. No matter how much he tried to imitate Parsifal's voice and manner, they did not get the same psychic help from him.

Whatever the reason, Otto Kahn said that he didn't know anything about a Rumanian astrologer named Reminescu, and never had anything to do with quackery like that; the whole idea was silly and boring. He said that Laurel Creston's grandmother was a sweet old lady, but she didn't have many ideas and objected to her progeny getting mixed in wars. He said, yes, there were a lot of Chinese spirits, all talking at once, but presumably they were speaking Cantonese, a dialect which he didn't understand very well. This, presumably, was an effort at humour in the urbane manner which the international banker had affected on earth; but when he said that Lings and Lungs

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and Sings and Sung sounded all alike to him, he was being somewhat less than gracious. When Lanny introduced him to Mr. Foo, he apologized and said he could see that the elderly merchant was a cultivated person, and that if he would name some spirit who spoke English, he, Otto Kahn, would endeavour to make contact with him. But when Mr. Foo named his former business partner, the best the control could do was to describe his costume, and say that his English speech was difficult to make out.

All very disappointing; and when Laurel had come out of her trance the best Lanny could do was to tell their friends some of the remarkable things which had happened in Germany and at Bienvenu. But that isn't convincing to other people; they say they believe you, and perhaps they believe that they do, but it isn't the same as seeing and hearing for themselves. Even then, as Lanny had observed, few people can believe even what they see and hear; it is all so contrary to received opinion. Since infancy they have imbibed the idea that each and every mind in the world is a separate enclave, shut off from all other minds and forced to communicate by light waves and sound waves and other physical media. If there could be such a thing as direct contact of mind with mind, how would anybody ever keep any secrets, and without secrets how could he live?

And if there were such a thing as foreseeing the future, how could you stand it? Said the sceptical woman physician: "If you could foresee it, you might change it, and then it wouldn't be the future." To which the speculative art expert replied: "If we were able to foresee the future, it would be our future that we should foresee the future and change it the way we wanted it." You can see how many complications this would introduce into the intellectual life. It would be worse than relativity!

## XV

Discussing thus like Milton's fallen angels the mechanism of the universe—"fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute"—they passed a pleasant evening, but they did not get the least hint as to what was being prepared for them at that especially fateful hour, nor did Lanny Budd get any further data as to the chances of his dying in Hong-Kong. Not by the mysterious psychic medium, which appears to be independent of both time and space, but by plain ordinary sound waves travelling at their customary rate of one thousand and eighty-seven feet per second, was the visiting American to get that information. They partook of a late supper and went to bed soon after midnight: Lanny didn't know about the others, but he slept the heavy sleep of one who had spent the previous night sitting on the hard bulwark of a fog-shrouded pier and whose gluteus muscles still ached from the ordeal.

It was broad daylight when he opened his eyes. He had been having a dream—he was in a thunderstorm and trying to hide from the lightning; this dream mingled with his waking state, so that he wasn't quite sure which was which. There were heavy, thudding sounds in his ears, and he didn't have to lie very long and speculate about them. He had heard them too many times in the course of twenty-five tragic years: first in London, during World War I, then in tormented Barcelona, Madrid, and Valencia; more recently in London again and in Paris, and worst of all, during half a dozen dreadful days and nights off the beaches of Dunkirk.

He had become an expert in the different sounds, having had them explained by those who were in the business. Ack-ack makes a sharp cracking noise, both when the shell is fired and when it explodes in the sky; bombs make a dull, heavy sound. Bombs, dropped from aeroplanes, were detonated when they hit the ground—or some other object such as a ship or a house. When Lanny heard their thump, he saw with his mind's eye a great burst of black smoke, and the debris of a house flying in every direction—bricks and stones, beams and pieces of furniture and human bodies.

He slipped into his clothes and ran out into the passage. There were the two ladies, in borrowed dressing gowns; presently their host and several of the servants joined them, all wide-eyed with fright. They had never heard such sounds before, and it was up to the expert to tell them what he knew. He guessed that the explosions were three or four miles away, but he couldn't be sure, because big bombs sound nearer than small. Could it be that the British were indulging in target practice? Mr. Foo said it was most unlikely, for the British had very few planes here, and the flyers got their training before they came. He went to the telephone; but apparently a great part of Hong-Kong had the same idea at the same moment, and he could not get a connection.

## XVI

It was Monday, the 8th of December, Hong-Kong time, and Sunday the 7th, at Pearl Harbour. The latter place being to the east, its time is ahead of China's; already the American battleships lay at the bottom of the harbour, and the great airfield was a mass of smouldering ruins. Mr. Foo turned on the radio and got the news of the attack—though of course the extent of the damage was concealed. They sat staring at one another, unable to realize what it meant, that America was actually in the war. Would it by any chance bring help for Hong-Kong?

It wasn't long before the radio was telling them what had been happening here. Japanese bombers had attacked the Kai Tak airfield.

on the Kowloon peninsula just back of the great hotel in which the Saturday night dance had been held. That dance had been for the benefit of the British-Chinese bomber force—and now there was no such force, at least not in the Hong-Kong territory. The radio didn't say that, for they wouldn't give any information to the enemy; they just said that bombs had been dropped, never what had been hit.

That was the way in this modern war; the first move of every enemy was to paralyse his opponent's means of attack. Never again would there be a declaration of war, and always the first target would be the enemy's airfields. In this case the Japanese had a field at Canton, and the distance was seventy-three miles; they would fly back and get another load, and they would keep that up all day long; you could pretty nearly figure when you would be hearing more of those "crumping" sounds. Regularly, for the next eighteen days the Japanese planes came at two- or three-hour intervals. Since night bombing wasn't accurate, they would let everybody have a night's rest, and come again at dawn, fog and storms permitting.

After Lanny had listened to the second relay, he said to his friendly host: "I hate to say it, Mr. Foo, but if the British have no way to oppose this enemy air force, your splendid city will not be able to hold out very long. It was command of the air that enabled Franco to destroy the Spanish republic; it was command of the air which enabled Hitler to destroy first the Dutch and Belgian armies, and then the French; it has been a slender margin of air power which has enabled the British to hold out against him."

In past times it had been the practice of kings to chop off the heads of heralds who brought bad news; but this wise old Chinese was a modern man and knew a fact when it was set before him. He said: "It is bad, but it not destroy China. Canton and Shanghai stand it, we stand it too."

Lanny was interested in the reaction of the others to this accumulation of tragedy. Said the woman doctor: "If there is going to be a siege, I can be just as useful here as at home, so there doesn't seem much sense in moving." She said it in her quiet matter-of-fact way—it was obviously so, and no false heroics.

Laurel Creston, who hadn't been brought up to face wholesale pain and sorrow, looked at this girl who was so plain and unprepossessing, and who wore spectacles. Laurel forced herself to smile. "What shall we do, Lanny, stay and see if there is anything to astrology?"

He, the magnificent male, the charmer, the much-desired, couldn't fail to meet a challenge like that. "Let's stick it out for a while," he replied. "Whatever happens to me, I'll say it was telepathy or clairvoyance. I'll never admit that the stars had anything to do with it!"

## 24

*Supped Full with Horrors*

## 1

THE Japanese air force did not confine their efforts to the Kai Tak airfield. They bombed oil depots, arsenals, and barracks, and of course vessels in the harbour; they blasted and sank the Clipper which was loading up for a flight to Manila; incidentally they dropped a bomb squarely in the middle of the Central Market and killed or wounded some eight hundred Chinese. When this news came over the radio, Althea said it was time for her to go and help. Mr. Foo said he would send her in his car.

Laurel suggested: "Perhaps they would take me as a nurse. I will go and offer." Lanny might have said: "I am doing important work for my government and have been forbidden to take unnecessary risks." Possibly it was his duty to say that; but instead he asked: "Do you suppose they would let me drive an ambulance?"

It wasn't so hard for the doctor, because she had been trained for this sort of thing from childhood. But what training the other two had got they had had to give themselves; all they had got from the world was to have good manners, to be properly dressed, and to have what they asked for and do what pleased them. It took considerable moral effort to step into that limousine and be driven to what they knew would be scenes of terror. Bombs were falling as they drove, and there were other sounds which Lanny recognized as gunfire. The enemy ground forces were attacking all around the perimeter of the "New Territories," a matter of some fifty miles, and that was far too great a front to be held by the few regiments of British and Indian troops on hand. The Japs would know how many there were, but Lanny couldn't be sure, so he said nothing. He braced himself for whatever ordeal might come, to himself and to these high-spirited women.

The doctor was the only one among them who possessed belongings, hers having been brought off the yacht. She now wore a surgeon's white coat and carried her kit. When she reported at headquarters, they told her where to go, and that was all there was to it. Laurel said: "May I help her?" and they answered: "Surely." Lanny said: "I thought maybe I might drive an ambulance; I have driven a car several hundred thousand miles in my life." They told him to go along.



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Within half an hour they were at the Jockey Club, which had been the centre of Hong-Kong social life, and now had been cleared out and turned into an emergency hospital. In a few minutes Althea was performing an operation upon a Chinese woman whose leg had been blown off and tied with a tourniquet. Laurel, who had never even seen an operation before, was instructed how to administer the anæsthetic. she began her new career by taking one glance at the chunk of raw and bloody meat, and then fainting. When she came to she wept with embarrassment, and proceeded to grit her teeth and do what she was told.

As for Lanny, he explained that he could drive but couldn't lift weights or jump about, on account of his recently damaged legs; also, he didn't know where anything was in Hong-Kong, except the big hotels and the American Club. They gave him a Chinese who spoke English of a sort, and a truck, which the British call a lorry. It was his duty to drive as fast as possible to places where the bomb blasts were reported, and there to make the best guess he could as to which persons had a chance to live long enough to reach the dressing station. He would use the authority conferred by his Anglo-Saxon features and good clothes to command some of the spectators to load the wounded into the truck, and the Chinese would translate his orders and perhaps make them more emphatic. If Lanny was too liberal in his estimate as to the life expectancy of people without hands, or feet, or faces, the doctors would correct him and he would do better next time. He would drive, tooting his horn vigorously, and trying not to make more casualties on the way. He would hear the shriek of planes power-diving over his head, and each time would say to himself "You will die in Hong-Kong!"

## II

This attack had been foreseen many years, and the British authorities had built air-raid shelters. When enemy planes were sighted and the wavering sirens blew, the people on the streets, regardless of race, creed, or colour, would dive into the nearest tunnel and the streets would be clear. All except the drivers of ambulances and military vehicles; they were supposed to continue and take their chances. Now and then, caught in a traffic jam, Lanny would have a chance to look up and see the black bombers and the poisonous "eggs" dropping from them.

They were bombing only "military objectives," for reason that they felt sure of taking the city; but their bombing was often inaccurate and in the course of the next few days Lanny witnessed many dreadful sights, such as he had got used to in the victim cities of Nazi-Fascism

in Britain and on the Continent. The shells were of the fragmentation variety, intended to kill people rather than to wreck blocks of houses; he saw human beings blasted and blackened by bombs, blown through doors and windows, buried under debris, suffering unimaginably dreadful wounds. He had many hard decisions to make: he had been told to favour the white people, and he had to tell himself that this was a necessary decision, because they were in charge of affairs and possessed the knowledge of how to run them. But it made him rather sick to listen to the scoldings of stout ladies in the fashionable hotels, objecting to the Chinese mob crowding in upon them during air raids.

When the blessed relief of darkness came, Lanny would have dinner with his two women friends, and twice the blessed old Chinese came, bringing some delicacy and begging them to come to his home and spend the night. They were pale and exhausted, living on their nerves; but there was always more work to be done, and they would insist on doing it. The place was now full of wounded soldiers: English, Scottish, Canadian boys, also Indian Gurkhas. A life hung upon your efforts, and how could you turn your back? Althea was relentless with herself, and Laurel would die before she would show herself weaker. Telephone calls would come, and Lanny would climb into his lorry, even though he was a bit dizzy.

Here and there they picked up items of news and traded them with one another. In the first day's air raid, the Japs had knocked out all but five of the planes at Kai Tak; these five had been dragged out by the crews from the burning hangars and towed by tractors away from the field. Quite an adventure story: where street signs or other obstructions barred the way they had been flattened by the tractors, and the planes had been dragged into rice fields and camouflaged with care. There was still a small strip of the airfield that was usable, and when darkness came the planes were brought back and flown away to Chungking with important passengers. They came back for three successive nights, and the enemy wasn't able to get them.

Who were these passengers? Madame Sun was one, Lanny learned; others were persons who had influence, and could persuade the British authorities that they were important. An American art expert would hardly have rated; but if he had presented himself as the son of Budd-Erling Aircraft, a powerful factor in lend-lease, he might have got by. And surely the niece of Reverdy Holdenhurst, who had dined at Government House only last Saturday evening! But Laurel put her foot down; she wouldn't go, at least not while Althea stuck it out. She thought that Lanny ought to go, because of the importance of his work; but Lanny said: "I am surely not leaving you."

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## III

The Japanese troops pressed the fight all around the perimeter. They had been especially trained for this campaign, and of course they had had spies all over the place. Traitor Chinese led them by paths through the hills, and they showed up behind the pill-boxes which were supposed to stop them. It was as Lanny had foretold to Mr. Foo—their planes machine-gunned the British in the trenches and bombed the supply depots behind the lines. Once more it was proved that armies on the ground cannot operate unless there is air power overhead to protect them. In three days the Japs had broken into Kowloon—and then there were dreadful scenes, for the Chinese masses began looting ahead of the advance, and the whites were helpless to protect themselves.

The greatest weakness of this Gibraltar of the Far East was its water supply. The reservoirs in which water was collected were conspicuous, and the enemy did not fail to bomb the outlets. Pretty soon there was not enough water to put out fires, and it became evident that there wasn't going to be enough to keep a million and a half human beings alive. The Japs brought heavy guns into Kowloon, and from then on the people of this island knew what a military siege really was. The shells poured in by night as well as by day, three every minute; and whatever target the enemy aimed at he hit. The agents of the puppet Chinese government which had been set up in Nanking were everywhere. They would climb to a roof and signal the Japs on the distant hills, and then they would dive down into the crowd and there was no way to find them. A few minutes later would come the shells. So the naval dockyards were blasted, the power plant, the radio masts on the "Peak."

Lanny was sent to bring supplies to the "Battle-Box," the communications headquarters of the Army. It was sixty feet underground, and supposed to be bombproof. Its location in the heart of the city was a secret closely kept; Lanny had to take an oath not even to mention that he had been there. But evidently the Japs had found out about it, for several shells exploded near, and as Lanny came out, a near-by building was struck and the blast knocked him twenty feet or more and flattened him against a wall. There was a minute or so right there when he thought the astrologer's prediction had come true.

He was taken to a first-aid station in his own lorry, but all he had to do was to lie still for a while. He had been lucky, but he knew that he couldn't draw upon that bank for ever. The British lines were being forced back all around the semicircle, and now the enemy was landing at night on the island itself. Demands for surrender came, but the British refused, and the censors allowed nothing to go out but optimism. Nevertheless, Lanny made up his mind that the end was

coming soon, and he told his two ladies. Mr. Foo came to see them, riding in a rickshaw; he had turned his car over to the government and was staying in town. When he saw how exhausted all three of them were he begged them to come to dinner with him and talk things over; you could still get food in restaurants, although the quantity was strictly rationed.

## IV

In a private room of the same Chinese restaurant where Lanny and Laurel had celebrated their arrival in this ill-fated city, the four people sat and discussed their future. For the elderly merchant there was, obviously, but one choice; he would stay with his family, and whatever the conquering "monkey men" handed out to them they would take. But for the three Americans it was different; there was still time to get away. A few were trying it every night; what was happening to them of course could not be known. But the decision must be made. "You go now—or then you don't go," said Mr. Foo.

It appeared that the decision depended upon the doctor. Lanny was willing to quit, and they all agreed that he could be considered to have done his duty by the island of Hong-Kong. Laurel was willing, except that she couldn't bear to desert Althea. It was this conscientious soul who had the scruples, her professional honour being involved. She could name one patient after another whose life depended upon her; and she didn't believe that the triumph of the Japanese would make much difference in her ability to help. Even "monkey men" would respect a doctor, and they would need her services, perhaps for their own wounded. For a physician, and especially one who was a devout Christian, war was something different from what it was to the ordinary person.

Lanny's comment was: "Surely you will find plenty of people who need your help in the province of Hunan. Does your Hippocratic oath oblige you to prefer this group over that?"

She replied: "It is just that the situation here is so acute."

"Yes, but it may very soon be acute in your home province, and you won't be able to get to it. You will be a prisoner of the Japs, and whatever your services are, they will be performed in a concentration camp."

"Japs get Hong-Kong, they soon go north," broke in the Chinese. "They cut railway to Hankow, they go through Hunan."

Laurel said: "Lanny, I think you ought to give Althea at least a hint about your own position."

"I am under pledge not to talk about that under any circumstances. But I suppose I can say that I am doing some important service for our



government. I was told to take a six months' furlough, and if I count the time I spent in hospital, that is more than half up. I hope to return to duty."

"Let me add this," put in the woman writer. "Lanny has never told me his secret, but I have been watching him for the past couple of years and I am pretty sure that I have guessed it. If you help him to escape you may be sure that you have rendered an important service to our country. And don't forget that our country is now in the war."

"Am I really needed for your escape?" demanded the doctor. "Mr. Foo can give Lanny a guide who knows some English, and who can be trusted."

"You know Madame Sun, Althea, and you understand her cause. You know how to speak to the Chinese partisans, and tell them what I have just told you. They will do things for you that they would never do for a wealthy stranger—or so they would consider Lanny."

"You go, Doctor Carroll!" commanded the elderly Chinese. "You go help Chinese people. You don't let monkey men get you. You remember Nanking!" He spoke for a minute or two in his native language—things perhaps too terrible to say in English—or perhaps he didn't know the words.

So at last the doctor gave way. "I'll have to leave my kit," she said. "If I sent for it, they would know I was going away. There are spies everywhere."

"You come my house, we talk," said the merchant. At last report the enemy had not got there, and if they did, he declared, he would know how to hide his friends. He would get some sort of conveyance to take them to the place, and he would make all arrangements for their trip. When Lanny tried to thank him, he replied: "You friend Madame Sun." Evidently that was going to be magic.

## V

In this comfortable home they rested, and thought with grief about what might be coming to it. They had seen so many fine buildings, so much of human comfort and convenience, go up in smoke and dust and rubble. Guns were going off all around them, but they were still a mile or two away at the nearest. It wouldn't take a tank many minutes to cover that distance, but their host assured them that he could put them where the Japs would never find them. He had already discussed the flight with a fisherman, owner of a junk and member of "the Party," a man who could be trusted. For three hundred American dollars he would stow them away in his hold. "Bad smell!" said the old gentleman, grinning.

They would steal through the East Lamma Channel, and after they

got by Hong-Kong and other islands, they would turn north-eastward along the coast. It must be a night of heavy fog, for the Jap Navy was on patrol against just such escapes. They would have a chance of freedom, and if they were captured—well, they would be in the same position as all the other people of the territory.

Meantime there was nothing to do but rest, and they needed it. They had learned to sleep through gunfire, and to eat food when they could get it, and to simulate cheerfulness always. They had learned to face even the ghastly idea that the American battle fleet was at the bottom of Pearl Harbour. Did this mean that the great naval base was going to share the fate of Hong-Kong? Did it mean that the Japanese would be able to invade California? Radio JBW—"Hong-Kong calling!"—was still working, but it played mostly Christmas carols; the news, obviously, couldn't be frank, since the enemy was listening-in. People sat and guessed, and believed the best or the worst according to their temperaments. The son of Budd-Erling, considered an authority because of his father, could assure them that America was building many planes and would build whatever number it took; assuredly President Roosevelt would never make terms with a government of assassins.

Old Mr. Foo found this comforting, and said: "Tell them we got plenty men for fight; all we need is guns."

"It is hard to get anything to China now," Lanny replied. "The distances are such that it may be easier to take Japan than to get supplies to China." That must have sounded like wild talk here in doomed and shell-torn Hong-Kong, but Mr. Foo was too polite to say so. Lanny added: "I have heard my father discuss it with air-force people, and that is what they were saying."

They had to consider the problem of money for their trip. All three of the Americans had some with them, and American money would be good even in the interior of China; certainly in any town there would be someone to exchange it. Chinese money varied from district to district, and Mr. Foo suffered when he thought how they would be cheated. As for silver, it was so heavy that coolies would have been needed if they were going to carry enough. Mr. Foo would provide them with some gold, and he suggested that the ladies should carry it well hidden—they might be less apt to be robbed. He would pay the fisherman; this reliable "Party member" would receive one half in advance and the second half when he returned.

Lanny brought up the question of how to repay these sums. Mr. Foo said: "You know China War Relief Association in San Francisco?"

"No doubt I could find it," replied the other.

"You pay them thousand dollar. You tell them it come from Mr. Foo Sung in Hong-Kong."

"I'll pay them two thousand, if I get there," said the liberal-minded traveller—and Mr. Foo said that was quite all right with him. Lanny added: "I will get a receipt and mail it to you when the war is over. On the chance that I may not get back, I will give you an order on my father, who will surely make it good." He wrote a draft on the President of the Budd-Erling Aircraft Corporation, Newcastle, Conn., instructing him to pay to Mr. Foo Sung, silk merchant of Hong-Kong, the sum of one thousand dollars. To the merchant he explained: "I won't say what it is for, because that might get you into trouble if the Japs got hold of it. You can tell my father when you write."

## VI

That was all, and they had nothing more to do but wait, and offer prayers for fog to whatever gods they believed in. The sound of the guns seemed to be coming nearer, and they speculated about this. Mr. Foo told them that his household was in a panic and wanted to run away—but where to? He had his Number Two wife put on her best robe and brought her in to meet the foreigners; she was young, pretty, and painfully embarrassed, but maybe that was because of the guns. With her came three small children, and they, too, were shy, and hardly dared lift their eyes to the tall, white-faced and light-haired apparitions. Mr. Foo had two sons by the Number One wife, they were safe in Chungking, he thanked his gods.

Next for their entertainment, the host produced a copy of a four-page newspaper, printed in the Cantonese language. He read them the name, *Tin Yin Yat Po*; that meant, he said, the *Heavenly Discourse Daily*. It was Jap propaganda, and he amused them by translating some of it for them. Then he had one of his servants bring in the birds, for a Chinese with money to spare does not keep dogs—they eat too much in a crowded country; he keeps beautiful singing birds, and he will pay fancy prices for well-trained ones. Mr. Foo had half a dozen, one of them a small black creature called a myna; it was a talking bird, and had been taught a dozen or more Chinese words, and one American—or is it two?—"O.K.!" One bird was named "Voice of a Thousand Bells," and the owner would take it out into the court when the sun shone, take the cover off the cage, and sit for a couple of hours listening to the song.

At the same time he would smoke his pipe and meditate upon the maxims of ancient Chinese sages. That had been his idea of a happy life, but now, he feared, it would soon be no more. The sages had had much to say about the uncertainties of fortune, and the need of the wise man to prepare himself to bear reverses. In proof thereof Mr.

Foo quoted Liu Chi, who had been servant to the Emperor Hung Wu, first of the Ming dynasty six hundred years ago. When asked about the possibility of divination, this ancient one had replied:

"In the space of a day and night, the flower blooms and dies. Between spring and autumn, things perish and are renewed. Beneath the roaring cascade a deep pool is found. Dark valleys lie at the foot of high hills. These things you know; what more can divination tell you?"

Lanny's comment was: "I suppose that is my answer to the question of whether I shall die in Hong-Kong."

## VII

They sat in this comfortable drawing-room, in which the sound of machine-gun fire had now been added to that of cannon. They had heard that it was in this part of the world that explosives had first been invented, but not applied to the killing of men. This, too, led to learned discourses; Lanny listened for a while, and then, when there came a lull, declared: "Mr. Foo, I have a special favour to ask of you. At first it may seem to be rude, but there is a reason for it."

"I am sure you never rude, Mr. Budd," said the old gentleman. "My house, all I have, is yours."

"What I wish to ask is that you and Dr. Carroll leave me alone with Miss Creston for a while. The reason is that I wish to ask her to marry me."

The effect of this was as if there had been a pin in the seat of the venerable Chinese; he leaped up. His race has been blessed with a keen sense of humour, and Lanny's remark delighted him beyond measure. He clapped his hands together like a child; his rather wide mouth spread into a grin, and he cried: "Oh, good, good, good!" Apparently he couldn't think of any other word. "Very good! Very good!" He turned his enraptured smile upon Laurel. "You take him! He very nice man. You take him quick! What you say?"

Laurel's usually pale face had turned bright pink, and she was in a state of confusion; but still, she was a Baltimore lady, even on this under side of the earth. "He hasn't asked me yet, Mr. Foo."

This was more than a hint, and the delighted old man held up his finger to the woman doctor. "Come," he said. "We go."

Lanny sat gazing at his friend, and smiling almost as broadly as the Chinese. He did not speak, and finally she exclaimed: "Lanny, what a thing to do!"

"I waited," he said. "But what chance did I have?"

She might have said: "You have it now," but being a Baltimore lady, she said nothing. It was up to him.

He took her hand and led her to a sofa where he could sit by her side. Still wearing his teasing smile, he began: "*We are going on a long journey, and it may sometimes be embarrassing. We may not be able to get separate rooms.*"

"*Is that the reason you want to marry me?*"

"There are many reasons, and I am beginning with the more obvious. Time and again I have wanted to try séances with you, but always it would have been a scandal. Think how nice it will be to be able to experiment all we please!"

"Lanny, stop joking!"

"I am not joking at all; these are solid, sensible facts. Another is that I may really die in Hong-Kong, and you may survive. I have earned quite a lot of money at my profession, and while I have wasted much of it in fashionable living, I still have some left. My father has my stocks and bonds in his safe-deposit box, and if anything happens to me I should like you to own them."

"You don't wish to leave them to any member of your own family?"

"There is no member who needs them. All my various fathers and mothers have begged me to get married, and they will have no ground of complaint if I take their advice."

"In order to talk about marriage, Lanny, it is necessary that something should be said about love."

"I am coming to that, dear. I have quite a discourse in mind, and we don't seem to have anything urgent to do until darkness falls."

"I am ready to hear whatever you have to say." Usually it was Laurel who did the teasing, and she could hardly complain if for once he had taken a leaf out of her book.

"I must have seemed a reluctant lover, and I beg you at the outset to believe that this has not been from choice."

"I have understood your circumstances, Lanny; at least I have guessed at them. But I had no means of guessing which of your various lady friends you would choose if you were free to choose."

"I admit that I have taken time to make up my mind; but then I had the time, and what was I to do with it? Speculation was all that was allowed me. I did that off and on, whenever I felt too lonely."

"Tell me honestly: were you ever in love with Lizbeth?"

"The phrase 'in love' is a dubious one, and I find myself reluctant to use it. I was 'in love' when I was young, and I remember it vividly; it denotes a state of complete absorption in passion, a suspension of the judgment that can lead to blunders and cruel suffering. I don't think that a man who has just passed his forty-first birthday ought to let himself be brought to that state—and still less ought he to desire it."

"I see that you have indeed quite a discourse prepared." Laurel

had recovered her self-possession, and was perhaps ready to take the teasing role away from him.

"Believe me, I had at least a month on the *Oriole* in which to work it out in my mind. I could not say it, I could only think it, and I thought about every aspect of the problem."

"Ever since you made up your mind that Lizbeth bored you too much for endurance?"

"Precisely then. You must understand that I was under heavy pressure to think about marrying Lizbeth. First my mother and all her friends, and then my father and my stepmother in Connecticut picked her as the proper person for me, and did everything they could to get us and keep us together. My father had business reasons, for Reverdy has become his heaviest stockholder. When I first met Lizbeth she seemed to me very sweet and lovely, and it was possible to think of making her happy. Apparently she fell in love with me from the first and never gave it up; in the end it became embarrassing, because I realized that she had no interest in my ideas."

"Nor in any ideas," said Laurel decisively.

"But there was a time, at first, when I thought: She is the only sort of woman I could marry without having to hide her. You understand, my job required me to be a near-Fascist and to go among people of that sort. If I married a woman of my own way of thinking, I should have to hide her, and that is a wretched way of life. I tried it once, and I know that it is hardly possible for either the man or the woman to be happy under such conditions."

The lady from Baltimore was looking at him curiously. "You are apparently referring to something that I do not know about."

"It is something I am starting to tell you about. A year or more after my divorce from Irma I was secretly married to a woman of the German underground. Nobody knows about it except my friends Rick and Nina, in England. Her name was Trudi Schultz, and I had known her for years in Berlin; she and her husband were fighting the Nazis, and the Nazis got him. I helped Trudi to escape, and she lived in Paris. I used to visit her there clandestinely; it would have ruined both of us if our connection had been known. Finally she disappeared, and I learned that the Nazis had her in a château they had rented near Paris. I pretty nearly finished myself trying to save her, but I was too late."

"What happened to her?"

"They spirited her away into Germany. Later on I was able to trick Rudi Hess into finding out for me that she had died in Dachau concentration camp. That was all over before I met you."

"What a dreadful story! I begin to see why you do not talk lightly about a third marriage."

"I could not bring myself to ask you to share such a life as I was obliged to live. It would have ruined my work to be known as the husband of 'Mary Morrow,' or even as her friend on any terms. You must have been annoyed by all the precautions I took, but I assure you they were necessary."

"Let me tell you something, Lanny, before you go any further. I am not hinting for an answer, and you don't have to say a word. I just want you to know that I have a guess concerning that trip to Poughkeepsie, and what it was about."

"I told you that it was on picture business."

"You did, and of course you have to go on saying it. However, I sat in a dark theatre, looking at a very silly movie, and I thought: He isn't going off to sell pictures just a day or two before he leaves on a dangerous mission. There is only one man in this part of the country important enough for him to be visiting; but of course I have to pretend that I haven't guessed. Please understand that I have never opened my lips on the subject to any person but you, and I never shall."

"Let's leave it there," he said, "and come back to the subject of love."

## VIII

Laurel Creston could have guessed the greater part of that "discourse" which he had prepared in his mind, but no woman wants to guess it, she wants to hear it, and she is never bored by it—at least, not if it is the right man speaking.

"I have had five love affairs in my life," he told her, "and some day I will tell you about them. Two of the women died, and the other three left me for what they thought was a higher destiny; one became a stage star, and the others became countesses; I couldn't have helped any of them on their chosen paths. From the two real and unselfish loves that I enjoyed I learned a lot, and you may have the benefit of my knowledge if you wish. It may be useful to you as a novelist, if not as a wife."

"By all means tell me," she responded.

"I don't think of love as a devouring flame or anything of that extravagant sort. It may be that, but I don't want any of it. I think of it as a partnership in some worth-while undertaking, and I believe that the basis of it is honesty and good faith, and mutuality of interests, or, at any rate, respect for each other's interests, whatever they may be. I think that love can be made, in much the same way that you make a cake, provided that you know the recipe and have the right ingredients. A man and a woman agree to help each other, to take care of each other, to try to understand each other's needs and tastes—and if they

do, and are honest and frank about it, love will grow between them. True and enduring love is mainly shared experience."

"In other words, Lanny, you are trying to tell me that you don't love me now, but that you will be able to if you try?"

"Nothing of the sort, dear. I mean that I am not putting the icing on the cake until after I have mixed and baked it. Many times I have wanted to love you, and many times I have said: 'No; you haven't the right to think about it. You haven't the right to suggest the idea to her. You haven't the right to torment yourself with the idea. You haven't the right to have a wife so long as you are——' well, what I have been."

"You're not that any longer?"

"I am on furlough with three months still to run, and it may be longer yet before I can get back to the job. I doubt if, after what happened to me in Halifax, I can go back into Naziland again. Of course I'm going on fighting Nazi-Fascism, but it may have to be in some different way, and it may permit me to have a wife and to cherish her, and not have to hide her as if she were a criminal."

"And so, you haven't loved me yet, but you might begin if you would let yourself."

"Let's not quibble about words, dear. I think that you are a lovely person. You are wise, and you are kind——"

"No, not kind, Lanny! I have a sharp, satirical tongue."

"Yes, but you aim your shafts at my enemies. We agree in our ideas, and I have seen you tried in the fire. I know that you could make me happy. The question is, whether I could make you happy. Is that better?"

"Much better," she admitted.

"All right then; and now it's your turn."

"I want to be wooed, Lanny. I want to be told all sorts of wonderful things about myself. And above all, I want to hear that I am needed."

He perceived that she had succeeded in turning the tables and now was teasing him, but he didn't mind. He had learned long ago that love is a game. He asked: "Then I have your permission to woo you?"

"Oh, indeed you have!"

"I don't know if we are going to escape, but even if we don't, love in a concentration camp will be better than no love at all. If we do escape, we have a long journey before us, and we'll make it a honeymoon journey, and practise enjoying every moment of it, even the hardships. I promise that I won't stop making love to you when the wedding vows have been pledged. I will woo you with every word, every glance, every thought. I will be gentle and kind. I will think



first about your happiness, and I will guard you as the most precious jewel in all Cathay—the Celestial Kingdom, the Flowery Kingdom, the Dragon Kingdom. Is that the way you want me to talk to you ? ”

“ That is the most delightful talk that a Baltimore bluestocking ever had offered to her.”

“ We will get you stockings of pure China silk, and golden slippers with pearls on them, and we will dance all the way from the South China Sea to Outer Mongolia. And every day I will tell you all the lovely things I have dreamed about you, and every night we will make the dreams come true.”

“ Did you really have dreams about me, Lanny ? ”

“ I said that I wouldn’t, that I had no right to—but then I did.”

“ And all the time I was giving myself up for a hopeless old maid ! ”

“ Old maid ? ” he exclaimed, for he knew what a dreadful thing that was among Southern-minded people. “ You are seven years younger than I am.”

“ Why, Lanny, how perfectly outrageous ! How did you find that out ? ”

“ Bless your heart, you told me yourself.”

“ I never did anything of the sort. Wild horses couldn’t have dragged it out of me ! ”

“ You told it, while you were in trance.”

“ Oh ! You asked me such questions ! ”

“ On my honour, I did not. You volunteered it when we were experimenting with age regression. You told about political affairs when you were sixteen years old. I knew it was a direful secret, so I kept it locked in my heart.”

“ And still you say you want to love me ! And when you might have had one who was only twenty-one ! ”

“ It would have taken her at least thirteen years to find out what I was talking about—and then she would have disapproved of it heartily.”

## IX

So they played at courtship, after the fashion which Laurel had been taught in her girlhood, by that same grandmother who now came to her in the spirit world and scolded her for not making proper use of her opportunities. “ Mary Morrow ” had conferred this art of coquetry upon the heroine of her partly completed novel, to the great bewilderment of the German lad in the university town. It didn’t bewilder Lanny, because he had had the advantage of reading the manuscript ; also, there had been plenty of flirts on the Coast of Pleasure, beginning with Sophie Timmons, whose technique he had

watched in childhood, and coming down to his half-sister Marceline in recent years.

He ventured to take her hand. "You haven't told me yet if you will marry me," he objected.

"Are you sure that you have asked me yet?" she countered.

"I ask you now. Will you marry me, Laurel?"

"I wonder—how does one get married in Hong-Kong?"

"One can't—it takes two."

"Three, I am sure. Somebody has to say the words."

"Mr. Foo will be able to tell us. We might have a Chinese wedding; they ring gongs and shoot off firecrackers and carry happiness banners."

"But no guns, Lanny. You will have to have this battle stopped. I couldn't bear to be married while other people are being killed."

"I will have to see the Governor about that. But seriously, darling—will you marry me?"

"This is so sudden, Lanny! I was brought up to look forward to a proper wedding, with veils and a trousseau, and at least four bridesmaids."

"When I was a little fellow——"

"You must have been a delightful little fellow, Lanny!"

"I heard a song about a bicycle built for two. Somebody was wooing Daisy, but it might as well have been another flower. Laurel, give me your answer, do! I'm half crazy, all for the love of you! It won't be a stylish marriage—I can't afford a carriage—and so on. I don't think I could get even a tandem bicycle here; but we might find the rector of this parish, or perhaps his curate. I don't know what the law is, but maybe Althea can tell us, or find out. But first of all, you have to say that you will marry me."

"Oh, Lanny, I'm not just playing! I am frightened—just as much as if I were a schoolgirl."

"I wonder," he said, "what would happen if I were to kiss you?"

"I really can't tell. You might try and find out."

So he tried, and his lips met hers and stayed there. He put his arms about her and she put hers about him, and pretty soon there was no doubt about the answer. The blood mounted into her cheeks and the tears came into her eyes, and when they broke off the embrace she was sobbing a little. "Oh, Lanny, I am so happy! I have wanted you for so long!"

"Is that really so, dear?"

"I oughtn't to tell you! You will discover how much I love you, and all my defences will be gone!"

"Don't worry, I am not that sort of man. I want to be loved and I want to be trusted."

"I am different from you, Lanny. I don't have to make my love like a cake. I am 'in love'—or will be if I dare."

He kissed her again ; he kissed her several times before he troubled her with any more similes or philosophical discourses. He hadn't been sure whether she cared for him, she had been such a rigidly proper lady. But now he made sure, and he let her know beyond peradventure that he was a serious and ardent lover. The next time he asked her: "Will you marry me?" she answered, promptly and humbly: "Yes, Lanny." So he kissed her again to seal the bargain and make sure she wouldn't change her mind.

## X

Mr. Foo had thoughtfully closed the drawing-room door; now Lanny got up and opened it. He clapped his hands and called: "Yoo-hoo!"—which he assumed might be Chinese for something. The others came quickly, and he told them that the answer was yes, and the old gentleman could not have been happier if it had been his own Number Three wedding. He wrung Lanny's hand and then Laurel's—it wasn't "ladies first" in the Middle Kingdom. Althea kissed Laurel and was as pleased, good soul, as if she were the lucky one.

Then came the problem of weddings. There was a Church of England chapel not far away, and Mr. Foo knew the clergyman; Althea, who had been to Hong-Kong before, had met him. She said that he would probably be ministering to the wounded, but perhaps they could go to him. Laurel, whose defences were gone, said: "Tell him we shall take but a few minutes of his time."

Althea tried the telephone and found that it was still working. Hong-Kong was dying slowly, but clinging to life up to the last moment. There was no response from the clergyman's house; at the host's suggestion she tried other places and finally found him in a near-by country store which had been turned into a hospital. There was a discussion, and Althea said: "It is an emergency, for a reason which cannot be explained over the phone." She, the good Episcopal lady, a physician who had been helping at the Jockey Club, had a right to be believed; also, a Chinese merchant who was wealthy and did many charities was a person to be obliged. The clergyman, who still had his car, promised to be there within the hour.

So now began a great flurry; for of course you can't just stand up and answer "Yes" a few times and let that settle it. There is no part of the world where there doesn't have to be excitement over a wedding. Mr. Foo's household would have to be present, and must have time to

put on festival clothing; there must be flowers in the room, and also something to eat—no time to bake a cake, but there would be wine and sweet wafers, and candied fruit, whatever could be found in cellar and storerooms in a hurry. There were servants rushing this way and that, bowing to the blushing bride, and she having to be told what to do, and feeling rather dizzy, because it really was "so sudden."

There was one serious trouble, which Althea mentioned with hesitation. "I have been told that you are a divorced man. Mr. Budd; and Mr. Notting may not feel that he is permitted—you know, the practice of the Church of England is very strict."

"That's all right," said Lanny soothingly. "I can explain everything to him if he asks."

## XI

There came a very proper young English priest, wearing his black costume and round clerical collar; he was thin, stoop-shouldered, pale, and like everybody else on this doomed island had been working himself to exhaustion. Lanny explained the situation: the lady in the case was an American spinster aged thirty-four; he himself was an American widower aged forty-one. They had been left behind from the yacht *Oriole*, having missed it in a fog. They were about to make an effort to escape by sea, this night if there was fog; they would have to travel through the interior of the country, and manifestly this would be awkward if they were not married; the lady would be hopelessly compromised. She was a most respectable person, a niece of the yacht owner, Mr. Holdenhurst, who had dined with the Governor the night before the Japanese attack. She had known Lanny for three years and it was in all ways a proper match.

Since Lanny described himself, quite truthfully, as a widower, Mr. Notting had no thought of divorce and did not mention that subject. The trouble, he said, was with the ordinances of the territory of Hong-Kong; a licence was required, and before it could be issued, the parties must give two weeks' notice to the Registrar of Marriages. Furthermore, in order for a marriage to be legal, all British colonies require a civil ceremony to precede the religious. And furthermore, the ceremony was not permitted to be performed in a private home; it had to be in a building licensed for the purpose.

Lanny had to think fast to get over that set of hurdles. Said he: "If you should marry us without a civil ceremony, and in a private home, that marriage would be valid in the eyes of God, would it not?" When the clergyman admitted that it would, Lanny added: "We could presumably have a later ceremony in some place and under some

circumstances which would be legally beyond controversy. Would that be enough for you, Laurel?"

Somewhat to his surprise she answered promptly: "It would."

So the prospective groom set to work to undermine the scruples of this conscientious gentleman on the subject of a licence. Englishmen are not accustomed to the idea of remaking laws to suit themselves or interpreting them according to their own convenience. But Mr. Notting could not deny that transportation on this island was almost unobtainable and the roads pitted with bomb craters. If anyone got into the city, he might not be able to get out again. The Registrar might be serving as a fire warden, or his office might have been bombed out of existence. If the island had to surrender, who would file any records, or trouble to take care of them? Surely there must be some point at which a state of emergency could be recognized, and the laws of God take precedence over those of men!

So argued the free-lance American—anarchistic as most of them are. The fact that he, and the bride also, were foreigners, and were going to remove themselves from the territory at once, certainly seemed to provide a case about which the government would hardly need to concern itself. Also, the fact that both parties had been baptized into the Episcopal Church gave them a right to appeal to Mr. Notting. Lanny wasn't making anything up when he said this, for he had been christened in the American church in Cannes—Emily Chattersworth had seen to it and become his godmother. He had about forgotten it, but didn't mention this detail. Laurel had been brought up an Episcopalian, and was quite clearly the sort of person who belongs in that Church. Also, it was evident that she was in fear of the shooting that was going on simultaneously with this discussion; she had a right to be—and perhaps the clergyman was also. Anyhow, he gave way, and said that under the special circumstances he would unite this pair in the holy estate of matrimony and take his chances of being exculpated by his government.

He put on his canonicals, and in this elegant drawing-room, which in a few hours was to be a smoke-blackened ruin, the couple took their stand before him. Althea and the members of the Chinese family constituted a congregation, respectful and much impressed. Mr. Foo had put on a ceremonial jacket of brocaded black silk over a blue gown, and his two wives also lent splendour to the occasion.

In a voice somewhat larger than you would have expected from such a frail figure the white-robed priest addressed the mixed company:

"Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this congregation, to join together this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony; which is an honourable estate,

instituted of God Himself, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and His Church."

And so on, until he pronounced the terrifying invitation: "If any man can show any just cause, why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace." Lanny could imagine Althea Carroll standing up and saying: "This is a divorced man." His heart skipped a beat or two during the pause; but she kept silence, now and thereafter for ever. Perhaps she too recognized that war creates emergencies, or perhaps she wouldn't take the chance of having to travel through Southern China with a couple living in sin.

The clergyman turned to Lanny—this was another case where gentlemen came first. "Wilt thou have this Woman to thy wedded wife, to live together according to God's law in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour and keep her in sickness and in health? and, forsaking all other, keep thee only unto her, so long as ve both shall live?" Lanny replied promptly that he would, and when the question was put to the lady, she said the same. Lanny pronounced his formula: "To have and to hold from this day forward; for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health; to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy law; and thereto I give thee my troth."

Then came Laurel's turn; Althea "gave" her, and she said her little piece. Mr. Foo had produced a fine gold ring, his wedding gift. The ceremony was completed and they were man and wife, whom God had joined together and whom no man was going to put asunder. Lanny took the clergyman aside and put the proper envelope into his hand, and blue-clad servants came hurrying with hot brown rice wine, and cookies known as "phoenix and dragon." Mr. Notting ate and drank quickly, for all through this service the guns had been banging and rattling, and they always seemed getting closer. No one could guess at what moment the enemy might burst into this compound. The clergyman shook hands quickly and hurried away, saying that he must get back to his wounded men.

## XII

It lacked but two hours of darkness, and Mr. Foo reported: "Fog coming up. You may be lucky." He reported also that the Tommies could be seen on a little ridge not far from the compound; they were digging themselves in for a stand. The trouble was, the Japs had a way of infiltrating as soon as darkness came; they might be sneaking up the gullies on this estate. They might take the compound as a defence point, or the Tommies might fall back upon it, in which case

it would become a shell target. "More good you hide," said the host; and they were willing.

He led them outdoors, inside the compound. The buildings formed a complete wall about it, except for the entrance gate, and a small hole known as the Door of Compassion through which food was passed out to the poor. He took them to one of the buildings, which appeared to be a combination of toolhouse and storeroom. In one corner was a pile of sacks which might contain grain or charcoal. A servant followed the master, and the latter said: "This is Ho. Good man, long time I trust him. He take you to boat." Now the trusted Ho dragged the sacks away, and there was a trapdoor which he lifted, disclosing a small black hole.

"Not very nice," said the master, "but safe. You stay two, maybe three hour, then boat come."

"Fine," replied Lanny. "But what about your family? Don't you want to hide them?"

"Jap come, he find family gone, he make search, he find family sure. He mad, he act bad. More good whole family stay, give him wine, give him food, smile, look friendly, he maybe not bad. He say he want China friend, he make what he call Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. Everybody hate only white man."

That did not accord with what Lanny had read about the behaviour of Japanese troops in Nanking, Canton, and other cities; but possibly they had now realized their mistake and would enforce discipline. Anyhow, it was no time for discussion, when at any moment troops of either side might be banging on that much-carved gate. Mr. Foo would go himself and open it, bow low, and hold out a bottle of wine in one hand and a plate of rice in the other, symbolical of friendship and submission.

Meantime, he put into his male guest's hands two objects which the guest had observed and wondered about. They were made of canvas, with canvas straps at their four corners; their shape was extraordinary, bulging in the centre like a pillow and tapering to flatness at the ends. They looked to Lanny like enlargements of objects he had picked up on the beach at Juan, and which the fisher-boys had said were shark's eggs, though he didn't know if that was true. The objects Mr. Foo gave him were soft, stuffed with cotton batting carefully quilted; when they were put into Lanny's hands he discovered that they were heavier than he had expected.

"These for ladies wear under dress," explained the host; and his face wore a happy grin as he saw the bewilderment of the three. "Big part in front, straps behind. People see, think ladies pregnant."

"Glory hallelujah!" exclaimed the new bridegroom. He had heard of bustles, but never one to be worn over the belly.

"Chinese man think have baby very honourable. He think you very rich man, important, you travel two wife. Both wife pregnant same time, he think you powerful man, great respect. Jap, too, he maybe don't bother pregnant woman. Number One wife fix these for you."

"Pray, thank your Number One wife on behalf of both the ladies," said Lanny, recovering his *savoir-faire*.

"Plenty gold sovereigns sewed inside. You open little cut, take out one, two maybe, sew up again. About eight hundred American dollar. You don't get gold in America, I hear."

"No, indeed; we have to turn it over to the government."

"You come China for freedom!" chuckled the old merchant.

The servant Ho had carried two waterproof duffelbags, containing various necessities of the journey, collected by their host. Included were two ladies' costumes in the Chinese style, loose jackets and what in America were called slacks. "More good for travel," said he. "People think more proper. You keep extra clothes for getting wet. You got parasol for sun and rain."

"I don't know how we can ever thank you, Mr. Foo!" exclaimed Laurel.

"Some day we beat bad enemy, you come China, maybe I come New York. We have good time, we laugh, how you bride gone seven month pregnant in one hour. Now you go down quick, keep very still, no laugh, no talk. You fix self all ready. Boat come, you go quick; maybe monkey man near shore, nobody know."

### XIII

Lanny went down the ladder, the bags were handed to him, and the women followed. The cellar was about eight feet square and six feet high. There were several boxes and on these they sat. The trapdoor was closed and they heard the sacks being moved over it. Then the place was pitch dark, and so the women could set about their dressing. They could not keep from giggling over the extraordinary appearance they were going to present to all China. In the Middle Ages in Europe crusaders setting off to the wars had devised what were called "chastity belts" to put upon their wives and lock fast. Presumably what this pair were now putting on might be called "unchastity belts," though Lanny wouldn't venture that jest until he knew them better. He kept a proper silence and pretended not to know that the women were shaking with laughter.

Laurel groped her way to him and sat by his side. He put one arm about her, and with his other hand he took one of hers; that was their



it would become a shell target. "More good you hide," said the host; and they were willing.

He led them outdoors, inside the compound. The buildings formed a complete wall about it, except for the entrance gate, and a small hole known as the Door of Compassion through which food was passed out to the poor. He took them to one of the buildings, which appeared to be a combination of toolhouse and storeroom. In one corner was a pile of sacks which might contain grain or charcoal. A servant followed the master, and the latter said: "This is Ho. Good man, long time I trust him. He take you to boat." Now the trusted Ho dragged the sacks away, and there was a trapdoor which he lifted, disclosing a small black hole.

"Not very nice," said the master, "but safe. You stay two, maybe three hour, then boat come."

"Fine," replied Lanny. "But what about your family? Don't you want to hide them?"

"Jap come, he find family gone, he make search, he find family sure. He mad, he act bad. More good whole family stay, give him wine, give him food, smile, look friendly, he maybe not bad. He say he want China friend, he make what he call Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. Everybody hate only white man."

That did not accord with what Lanny had read about the behaviour of Japanese troops in Nanking, Canton, and other cities; but possibly they had now realized their mistake and would enforce discipline. Anyhow, it was no time for discussion, when at any moment troops of either side might be banging on that much-carved gate. Mr. Foo would go himself and open it, bow low, and hold out a bottle of wine in one hand and a plate of rice in the other, symbolical of friendship and submission.

Meantime, he put into his male guest's hands two objects which the guest had observed and wondered about. They were made of canvas, with canvas straps at their four corners; their shape was extraordinary, bulging in the centre like a pillow and tapering to flatness at the ends. They looked to Lanny like enlargements of objects he had picked up on the beach at Juan, and which the fisher-boys had said were shark's eggs, though he didn't know if that was true. The objects Mr. Foo gave him were soft, stuffed with cotton batting carefully quilted; when they were put into Lanny's hands he discovered that they were heavier than he had expected.

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honeymoon, just to sit there, and know that one problem at least was settled for life. They wouldn't have to play any more games, or practise more coquetry. She was his, and he was hers, and it was wonderfully soothing and pleasant. Now and then he would think of that odd attachment to her costume, and would grin unseen; he wouldn't for the world make any move to investigate it, for though she was his lawful wedded wife she was still the decorous Southern lady. He was, however, privileged to press her hand and to hold her closer to him, and this he did. It was a way of repeating the words she had been so determined to hear; words so simple and obvious, yet which never become a cliché: "I love you."

Now and then they would feel the earth shake beneath them. They were closer to it than they had ever been before, and these artificial earthquakes went through them as if they were a part of the earth, never individualized, never set free. Each time he felt the shudder pass through her body, magnified by her nervous system. After an especially heavy explosion she whispered into his ear: "Lanny, promise me something."

"What is it, dear?"

"Whatever happens, you won't try to resist."

"No, of course not. I have no weapon."

"I mean, whatever they do to me. They would kill you if you did."

"You know what they may do to you, dear?"

"I know. But whatever it is, you must not move, not even speak. Without you I do not want to live. Promise me."

"All right," he whispered. His thoughts were grim, for to rape the women in the presence of the men had been one of the methods whereby the Sons of Heaven had been manifesting their superiority to the white race.

Perhaps half an hour passed, and they heard sounds overhead. The sacks were being dragged away, and the trapdoor opened. It couldn't be time for the boat; could it be that the enemy had come? They did not move, they hardly dared breathe—until they heard the soft voice of their friend the silk merchant. "Paintings," he said, and by faint light Lanny saw the reliable Ho sliding a large roll into the opening. Lanny took it, and found that it was wrapped in strong cloth and tied. He understood that the old gentleman had had his precious paintings taken out of their frames and rolled up. He eased the burden gently down to the ground and rolled it into a corner. "O.K.," said the host, and the trapdoor was let down again.

After that there was no way to keep track of time. They were in the hands of fate—or was it the stars, as the ancient Greeks and Egyptians had imagined? Lanny, who had always proceeded on the theory that it was better to be happy than sad, used the time to supply

that deficiency which the lady from Baltimore had noted in his conduct. He had her hand, and the hand is a means whereby through uncounted ages the human organism has conducted investigations and made discoveries. The gentlest pressures can reveal the most intimate secrets; and when Lanny put her hand to his lips and kept it there, she wasn't left in the slightest doubt as to what he meant. It wasn't a marriage of convenience, and it wasn't just a preliminary to psychic research.

Althea had politely seated herself as far away as possible inside an eight-foot square. Being a qualified doctor, she knew all the facts of life, but that made no difference in the proprieties. This innocent little courtship had to be carried on without the faintest trace of sound: not a murmur, not a sigh, not a movement of the lips—otherwise Laurel would have been disturbed by the thought that Althea would be disturbed. Those laws of modesty, of reticence, of propriety, were harder than any steel. But hand can move upon hand without betrayal, and a man's hand can touch a woman's breast and tell it all the things he has neglected to tell in times past. Both of them knew that his hand might be shot off within the hour, that her breast might be pierced by sharp steel; but these few minutes were safe, and precious with a loveliness which Nature had been preparing for hundreds of millions of years, so that her purposes might not fail of accomplishment and that life might be renewed even in the very presence of death.

## XIV

Time passed, and the earth shaking grew more violent; the explosions were surely nearer. But there was nothing they could do about it. If that shed caught fire, could they manage to lift the trap-door with the sacks on top? Lanny doubted it. The cellar would gradually grow hotter, and they would be baked alive. They put their trust in Mr. Foo; but suppose that he was killed by a shell? There was nothing to be done but to draw a little closer and hold each other a little tighter.

At last, sounds over their heads again! The sacks were being moved. Once more it was the question: friend or foe? The door was lifted, and the voice of Mr. Foo said: "Come quick!" They went up the ladder, the two pregnant ladies in Chinese trousers and jackets, and then the man. Night had come, but their host had a small flashlight, and Lanny got a glimpse of the two female forms, and he saw it was a perfect illusion. Evidently the Number One Mrs. Foo had also known the facts of life, and they were the same here as in the western half of the world.

"Fog very good," declared the old man. "Boat come soon. You follow Ho, he take you quick. Very quiet, may be anywhere monkey man."

All three wrung his hand and thanked him. He said: "I am old man, you young. Go quick. Good luck."

The reliable servant tucked one of the ladies' bags under each arm, and Lanny carried the small bundle of possessions he had managed to accumulate while driving the lorry in Hong-Kong. They went, half running, through the beautiful gate—"To and From the World Gate" was its name—and struck out across a field. Presently they were following a hedgerow; the man in front stopped now and then to listen, and they all held their breaths. The fog was thick, and drifting slowly; you could feel it cool against your face. Other creatures were moving that night, but whether they were friend or foe, or perhaps animals, could not be known. The fugitives moved, lifting their feet carefully; the women were wearing Chinese canvas shoes, their leather shoes being in the bags.

Presently they came to a gully, and after listening, they slid down into it. There were many stones, which made hard walking; but there was a trace of a path, and they followed it by putting a hand on the shoulder of the person ahead. Much stopping and listening, and suddenly the guide whispered: "*Yat pun jai!*"—which means Japanese dwarfs. He led them to one side, where they crouched against the side of the bank, partly hidden by bushes. They heard sounds of men walking, and presently there came a file up the gully, evidently trying to move silently. They might be enemy troops or they might be British—there was no guessing. They passed, and it was still again, and the journey was resumed.

Lanny guessed that this gully would lead them to the sea, and so it proved. The slope diminished, the ground became wet, and presently it was a stream, and they were following a path along its side. When they stopped to listen they heard gurgling water, and before long they realized that it was lapping waves. They couldn't see ten feet in front of them, but there was an open feeling, perhaps a matter of sound echoes; they knew they were facing the sea. They went a short way along the shore and stopped at a small platform, wet and slimy, perhaps used to haul a fishing boat upon. This was the place, and the guide took them a few feet back into the bushes, where they crouched and waited.

How any junk was going to find the spot in that dense fog was a mystery to the Occidental mind. But Lanny had read somewhere that the Chinese had invented the compass, and he hoped they hadn't forgotten its use. Anyhow, there was nothing to do but wait. Althea knew a few words of Cantonese, the dialect spoken in this part of the

country, entirely different from Mandarin spoken in the northern and central parts. She translated to the others what Ho said: "Boat maybe." It seemed like a slim chance, but their lives depended upon it. If daylight found them crouching here, they would have a hard time escaping.

## XV

Soon there came over the water what they took to be the sound of sails being lowered. A Chinese junk has lateen sails, which means that there are parallel strips of bamboo all the way across. When these come down they make considerable noise. Apparently this was a shallow cove, and the vessel was being poled in. There was the sound of an anchor rope being paid out, and presently a tiny skiff appeared at the platform—a craft barely large enough for one passenger and the man who poled or paddled.

This was the fisherman to whom their fate was entrusted. They saw him only as a shadowy form. He exchanged a few whispered words with Ho, and the latter put a packet of money into his hands. Lanny gave the faithful servant a proper *cumshaw*, and then got into the rickety little skiff. He was going first, so as to preclude the possibility of the junk sailing off with the two women. He climbed on to the deck and stood waiting while first Laurel and then Althea were brought on board. The skiff was lifted in, and while the rest of the crew pulled up the anchor, the fisherman signed to his passengers to follow.

Lanny could see almost nothing of this junk, but he had seen them by the hundreds in the South China Sea and in Hong-Kong harbour. They have curved prows and a high poop, and Lanny guessed that this was a small one, perhaps thirty feet long. They entered through a doorway so low that they had to stoop; a hatchway was lifted and they went down a companionway that was almost a ladder. They were in a part of the hold, and remembered what Mr. Foo had said: "Bad smell." He had been a good prophet. Fish nets had been stored here, perhaps for decades, and the stench was strong; the three would smell of fish for the rest of their visit to China. But then, what are a few fish or a million fish compared to all the conglomerate smells of the Orient? Nothing to sneeze at.

Some boxes were to be their bed, and behind them they could hide in case of alarm. There was a pile of nets and another of gunny sacks, and they might pull these over themselves and escape detection in case the Japs came aboard. The fisherman explained this, in words which Althea said she was able to understand. The man added: "I am old-time Party member. You friends Madame Sun." The magic still worked!

They lay in utter darkness, and listened to the sounds of the anchor being pulled up and the sails being set. Then their bed became tilted, and they knew that the vessel was under way. They could feel the vibration of the waves hitting the planking. They could imagine a sailing vessel sliding through this black fog, and could only pray that the compass was true. Of course the fisherman would know these waters as a dog knows its own yard; south-east through the East Lamma Channel, and then, after passing the islands that lie east of Hong-Kong, north-east along the coast.

It was safe to talk now, and Lanny leaned toward his bride, saying: "At least the astrologer is licked. I am not going to die in Hong-Kong."

"Don't say that!" she whispered, still afraid of the fates. "We are not out of danger yet."

"Near Hong-Kong or around Hong-Kong, perhaps—but not *in* Hong-Kong, or *on* it!"

## AN ANCIENT TALE OF WRONG

25

*Looking over Wasted Lands*

1

THERE were no means of guessing how long that voyage to the continent of Asia might last; and at any moment it might be interrupted by a crash upon rocks or a shot from a Japanese war vessel. There was no longer any reason for silence, so they discussed these and other possibilities: what they were likely to find when they were put ashore, what means of travel they would use, what course they would take. Althea, who knew the country, would be the captain of the expedition, and she gave them a series of lectures on life in subtropical China. When they were tired, they stretched themselves on hard planks with the duffelbags for pillows. The doctor again removed herself to a discreet distance, but this was not necessary, for it was no time or place for a bridal night.

Hand in hand Lanny and his new wife lay, and part of the time they dozed, or thought about the strange adventure of their times; they shared in mind the agony of a civilization undergoing assault from organized banditry. Long ago Trudi Schultz had remarked to Lanny that it was a bad time to be born. That had certainly proved true for her, and now Lanny confronted the possibility that the same dark fate might be hanging over the gentle and sensitive woman who lay by his side. He would be helpless to protect her, alike against the cruelties of Nature and those of man: whether a storm were to come up while this sailing craft was crossing a corner of the South China Sea, or whether it were to be boarded by primitive barbarians armed with the instruments of killing devised by modern science.

Hours passed, and more hours. Lanny had his watch, and kept it wound, but he had overlooked the importance of such a small convenience as a box of matches. Perhaps the kind Mr. Foo had put some in the bags, but they did not want to unpack them in this filthy place. They did not think they could keep food on their stomachs here, especially as the junk was now beginning to toss and her timbers to creak. They clung together and talked some more; they agreed that



the tossing meant they were out in the open sea, and this meant they were safer from the Japs, if not from the sea. They did not know which to fear more.

What would the fisherman do if a storm came up? What fishermen always did, Lanny said—fight for their lives. They would have to keep away from the coast, unless it was an off-shore wind. Such a wind would blow the fog away, and perhaps expose them to sight of the enemy. Lanny had heard that the British flyers now had a device by which they could see in the dark, by means of radio waves echoed back; whether the Japanese Navy had it, who could guess? Lanny, who had done a lot of sailing and yachting in his fashionable life, noted the slow pitching of the vessel from front to back, and guessed that they were running before a wind. That would speed their journey, but make it harder for them to land.

Althea, the devout soul, revealed that she was praying. She invited them to join her. They had just pledged their marital troth in the presence of the Lord, and in His name; why should they not ask Him to protect them and bring their marriage to fruition? The prayers of three were stronger than those of one; had not Jesus said: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them?" Althea said the prayer ordained for use in storms at sea. "Oh, most powerful and glorious Lord God," it begins, "at whose command the winds blow, and lift up the waves of the sea, and who stillest the rage thereof; We, thy creatures, but miserable sinners, do in this our great distress cry unto Thee for help: Save, Lord, or else we perish." This she repeated, and the others learned it.

To persons who had fallen under the spell of materialistic science and had never been able entirely to escape it, this seemed an infinitely strange procedure. But prolonged anxiety and the sight of death had brought them to the state of little children, and they did what they were told. Presently Althea sang, and again they learned the words:

Eternal Father, strong to save,  
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,  
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep  
Its own appointed limits keep;  
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee  
For those in peril on the sea.

## II

It has happened many times, as travellers on the sea have come home to testify; but of course there is no testimony from those who

did not come home—therefore the testimony is not found convincing by the devotees of materialistic science. Be that as it may, the slow pitching of the junk gradually diminished, and likewise the creaking of her planking and timbers. The lapping of little waves seemed like dead silence in comparison, and the travellers sat motionless, waiting. Was that the sound of an anchor rope being paid out? Did that mean they were safe in a harbour, or could it be that the vessel had been captured at sea, and that it would be Japanese who opened the trapdoor? Should they cover themselves with the nets and the filthy gunny sacks?

While they hesitated, the trapdoor was opened and a dim light shone in. They heard the voice of the "old-time Party member," saying the magic phrase which men know all over the earth if they have had any contact with white persons: "O.K., boss!"

So they handed up their belongings and climbed the short ladder. The light was that of a dim lantern, but they could see the figure of their deliverer, and Lanny grasped his hand and patted him on the back and said: "Good fellow! O.K. fellow!" The three passengers were so happy they hugged each other; that is, Lanny hugged Laurel, and she passed it on to Althea. It was really a remarkable occasion; and when you have condescended to pray and sing a hymn, you can surely afford to laugh and shout for a while.

They were escorted to the open deck, and discovered that dawn was breaking. They could see that they were in a little cove, and that there was a flat shore. The fisherman pointed and said: "*Hou fung!*" Althea translated: "The Rear"—which was their phrase for "Free China." So of course they wanted to get there quickly. Lanny presented a proper *cumshaw* to all members of the crew—three besides the captain—and shook hands with them. He asked Althea to make plain to them that America was now in the war on China's side. These weather-beaten men of the sea beamed with pleasure, and said: "Come soon!" They made it plain that they wanted none of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.

The little skiff was set down in the water, and Lanny climbed in. They anticipated no danger, but it was proper for him to go first on chance that danger might be met. Holding one of the precious duffel-bags in his arms he was paddled to a rocky point where he could step ashore dryshod. While the skiff went back to the junk, he dived quickly into the bag, and discovered to his relief that the elderly Chinese angel had provided head-nets and gloves against the mosquitoes which are the curse of the tropics. In fact, the angel had put in a score of little conveniences which were plentiful in Hong-Kong but unobtainable in the interior—matches, a flashlight with spare batteries, an aluminium kettle for boiling water; also iodine and

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quinine. Mr. Foo could afford to be generous, alas, for he had to reckon that whatever he did not give to his allies would soon belong to his enemies.

First came Laurel, for the doctor, determined altruist, would always be last: the youngest, the strongest, and not married, she would insist. Lanny took his wife in his arms and kissed her shamelessly; then he stood off for the first good look at her since she had entered her seventh month. It really wasn't fair to expect him to keep from laughing, and finally she gave way and joined him. She was blushing scarlet, but had to admit that it was an ingenious way of hiding money. The Chinese had been in this war for four years, and prior to that they had been in wars for at least four thousand; so they had had to learn devices. "For ways that are dark and for tricks that are vain the heathen Chinese is peculiar!"

Althea came in due course; and they said the last farewell to their gallant preserver. "Good fishing!" said Althea, groping in Cantonese, and they shook hands all round once more. They would have stood to wave while the man paddled away—but for the facts that he had to turn his back, and that the mosquitoes were after them. As soon as Althea had put on her net and gloves, she produced her tiny *Book of Common Prayer*, without which she never travelled. She had asked a favour, and now that it had been granted she would not forget to say thanks. Standing on safe and solid shore she read aloud from the 107th Psalm:

Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness: and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men!

That they would offer unto him the sacrifice of thanksgiving: and tell out his works with gladness!

They that go down to the sea in ships: and occupy their business in great waters:

These men see the works of the Lord: and his wonders in the deep.

For at this word the stormy wind ariseth: which lifteth up the waves thereof.

They are carried up to the heaven, and down again to the deep: their soul melteth away because of the trouble.

They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man: and are at their wits' end.

So when they cry unto the Lord in their trouble: he delivereth them out of their distress.

For he maketh the storm to cease: so that the waves thereof are still.

Then are they glad, because they are at rest: and so he bringeth them unto the haven where they would be.

## III

There were small fishing craft drawn up on the shores of this cove, and rice cultivation began almost at the water's edge. That was one of the first things they were to learn about subtropical China; never would you find a single square inch on which food might be grown that did not have food growing. No poor peasant ever saw a flower—unless it was being grown for a rich man's market. Another thing you learned was that labour in the fields began at the first trace of daylight; it continued until it was no longer possible to distinguish a rice stalk from a weed. Already the peasants were at work, using heavy-handed hoes; their clothing was a pair of ragged blue jeans, a pair of straw sandals, and a straw hat with an immense wide brim against the heat which the sun would pour upon them as soon as it appeared over the horizon.

Another peculiarity the strangers observed at once: these toilers had no interest in anything except their toil. Not one stopped to stare, to say nothing of exchanging a greeting. You might have thought that foreigners were landing in this cove every few minutes, and that the peasants were bored with them. But Althea said they had no curiosity, they could not afford such a luxury. Either their fields were small, subdivided again and again as families grew, or else the field belonged to a landlord who claimed the greater part of the crop. Get to work and stay!

Rice is grown in swamps, whether natural or artificial. If it is a natural swamp, floods come, and the crop is ruined, and the mud house is washed away, and the bodies of peasants are found hanging from tree limbs. When the ground is higher, the water must be brought to it by irrigation ditches or by the labour of arms, legs, and backs. One of the first sights the travellers saw was men with yokes across their shoulders from which dangled two heavy buckets made of wood or bamboo staves; they filled these at the stream and carried them up to the higher level to sprinkle the young plants. Presently the travellers came to a treadmill which carried a continuous stream of buckets down to the water and then up to a trough, where they emptied themselves and went down for another load. A patient bullock walked this treadmill, and he, too, began with the dawn. There were families too poor to own a bullock, and for these the wife and daughters did the walking. They, too, had no curiosity.

A road in South China, they discovered, is a narrow causeway between rice fields. It is paved with flagstones, and there is only one row, three or four feet wide. This is symbolical of a peculiar fact which the visitor realizes only gradually; he misses something, and at last he realizes what it is. There are wheelbarrows but no carts of

any sort; everything is carried on the backs of bullocks or human beings, mostly the latter. Only in the towns does one find vehicles.

The sun came up, a ball of blazing fire, and then they were glad that Mr. Foo had included in his Christmas package three light parasols made of bamboo and paper, such as everybody carries in this region. The better grade are waterproof and serve against rain as well as sunlight. The path led along a stream which flowed into the sea, and they assumed that there would be a village at the path's end. They met a peasant wheelbarrowing a load of straw, and Althea attempted to ask him in Cantonese; but, alas, he spoke the Swatow dialect. Farther in the interior it would be the Hakka dialect, and they would have to find an official or other educated person before they could talk.

Villages were everywhere, Althea assured them, and it never did any good to ask distances, because the Chinese were so amiably polite; they would always tell you what they thought you wanted to hear, so they would say that the place was "near." The travellers needed no map in this land; it was enough to know that they must continue about a hundred miles in a northerly direction, so as to get safely away from the district held by the Japs, and then they would head to the north-west a couple of hundred miles and hit the Siang-kiang, a river near which the home of Althea's parents was situated.

#### IV

They came to a village, and there for the first time they met people who looked at them with curiosity and tried to answer questions. The head of the village, a very old man who put on a soiled white robe for the occasion, was able to speak a few words of Mandarin. He found nothing strange that an American gentleman should be travelling with two pregnant wives; Althea told him that Mr. Budd was an immensely wealthy American, a friend of President Roosevelt, and had come to make plans for helping China against the Japanese. She was making up this mild fib and it troubled her conscience. The old man beamed, and bowed his head to the level of his waist; he escorted them to a tea-house where they could sit in the shade—it was made of bamboo frame and hanging reed mats.

Here Althea began a ritual which was important in China, and which she as a physician took in charge. In that crowded land all "night soil" is saved and used as fertilizer, so everything must be assumed to be infected; all food has to be thoroughly cooked and all water boiled. Arriving anywhere, Althea's first duty was to go to the kitchen and fill her aluminium kettle with water and set it on a fire to boil

for ten minutes. She would keep it until it had cooled, and then pour it into the leather water-bottles provided for their journey.

In the tea-house a meal of chicken cooked with walnuts and rice was prepared. Lanny and Laurel had amused themselves in Hong-Kong with chopsticks; now they had to learn seriously, and not shock the thousands of people who would be watching them all the way across the land. "Face" is all-important, and the dignity of the great American republic must be maintained. To be seen shovelling rice into your mouth with a spoon or a fork would have been like being seen in the Ritzy-Waldorf of New York putting pie into your mouth with a knife. It wouldn't help you to tell the people in the Ritzy-Waldorf that you came from a land where all pie is eaten that way; this would make matters worse, for it would be telling the diners that all your people were as ill-bred as yourself.

By the time the meal was finished the next stage of their journey had been arranged. Outside the tea-room stood three small donkeys; they had no saddles, only cloth on their middles, but there would be no danger, for they had never moved faster than a slow walk since the day they were born, and a man would walk ahead of each leading him with a rope. Apparently it had not occurred to anyone that one man might lead three donkeys in a string, both going and coming; but men were far more plentiful than donkeys, and perhaps no man was willing to trust his own out of sight.

There was the question of money, and the village elder told them what to pay. Lanny had some "Hong-Kong notes," and these were still good in the neighbourhood. In the old days travellers had had to carry loads of "twenty-cent pieces" and "cash." These coins were supposed to be of copper, but they had been debased, and now, in wartime, they had disappeared entirely. Paper money was so plentiful that a dollar note, a "mex," was the smallest that would buy anything. Gold, of course, was almost beyond price, and the job of changing a sovereign was to be undertaken with many precautions.

The procession set out: three tourists seated with dignity, holding their baggage in place with one hand and their parasols with the other. It would have looked odd in America, but here most distinguished; nobody asked why a special envoy from President Roosevelt should bring two gravid wives with him. The sun blazed, and perspiration streamed from the bare backs of the guides, and from the foreheads and armpits of the riders; also from the donkeys—so before long there was a new odour added to that of ancient fish. If the travellers got tired of clamping donkey bodies with their knees they could get off and walk alongside, but they must still hold their duffelbags in place. No use ever to be impatient in the Orient; just tell yourself



that you hadn't died in Hong-Kong and that every step was away from the Japs.

This wasn't to be a long trip, they were assured, and at the next village, somewhat larger, they would be able to get palanquins. The road followed the bank of the small stream, and in course of the journey they learned all about rice culture, for the paddies were at various stages. Also there was sugar cane, and another tall plant which Althea said was hemp; soil, sun, and water, and you could grow anything. Beautiful golden oranges hung from trees, and these they were free to buy and eat; but no thin-skinned fruit, for even your own hands were infected with the dust of China, and it did no good to wash them with the water of China.

The next village was larger, which meant that it was more crowded; the houses were packed together, in order to leave more land for cultivation. They had been told the name of the official to ask for and they asked, and again were received with honour. The name of President Roosevelt proved to be even more potent than that of Madame Sun. The drivers were paid off, not without much discussion; another meal was served and more water boiled, and there were three palanquins waiting. A palanquin in this region was not a straight chair as in Hong-Kong; it was a sort of litter in which you reclined, with only your head propped up. It was old and ragged, but had a blessed sunshade overhead, so you did not have to hold the parasol. Two men carried the palanquin on their shoulders, and walked at a steady pace; when you got used to the motion you could doze if you wished.

Apparently these lean and stringy yellow men never tired, but they wouldn't go more than a certain distance from home; they were afraid of the unknown, perhaps of robbers, perhaps of evil spirits; you had to pay them off and get a fresh outfit. Coolies, and their fathers before them, had been beasts of burden for millennia; but now, under the influence of the revolution, they were waking up. They hated the British but liked Americans; now they had learned to hate another sort of yellow people. Lanny had the fortune to draw one who liked to talk, and who pointed out sights on the way. He seemed unable to understand that the traveller couldn't understand the Sawtow dialect, and Lanny didn't try to explain.

v

The sun was going down, and another village lay ahead of them. In it was an inn, they had been told; also, not far away there was an American mission. Althea had been able to glean the fact that it was conducted by the Seventh Day Adventists, and this was an unorthodox

sect, most exasperating to a respectable Episcopalian. When after a lifetime of effort you had succeeded in teaching a few heathen that Sunday was the Lord's day, and on it thou shalt do no manner of work, how preposterous to have some white people turn up, calling themselves Christians and telling the heathen that the Lord's day was Saturday and that the time to quit work was at sundown on Friday!

Even so, they would have liked to visit that mission, where they could be sure of finding clean bed and board; but there was another objection, the presence of two pregnant ladies with only one man. They could not take off those belts and let the coolies or the domestics see them in their virginal state; to do so would be to start a story which would spread by the tea-house grape-vine all over China. It would reveal the fact that they carried treasure, and thus would be an invitation to all the bandits of the land—and there were hordes of them! No, for better or worse they had committed themselves to the *mores* of the country—and also to its bed and board.

Even Althea hadn't realized how primitive an inn could be in this remote region. They had assumed that there would at least be bedrooms, shared only with fleas, lice, and bed-bugs; but now they discovered that there was one common shelter, in which wayfarers were privileged to sleep for the payment of a few cash. A bed consisted of boards spread on two trestles, and a pillow was a wooden block if you had nothing else. The Chinese are a gregarious people, and the more there are of them crowded into a room, a street, a village, the safer they feel; their love of company includes pigs and chickens, and even safe friendly creatures like donkeys and bullocks. They are not used to white tourists joining them on equal terms; however, if such apparitions appear, they will smile and bow, and then start chattering with immense volubility. Their children will stand and stare, perfectly motionless, perfectly silent, for as long as no one calls them away.

The bones of these refugees already ached from hard boards, but there was no alternative; they were tired, and they sat down. The doctor set about her boiling water ritual; investigating the prospects in the kitchen, she came back and reported that they could have a stew made of duck and rice cooked with strong spices, provided they were willing to wait for the duck to be caught and killed. They signed the death warrant, and meanwhile quenched their thirst with tepid water from their bottles.

Among the treasures in their duffelbags was a can of insect powder and a little squirt-gun, and with that they sprayed the wooden shelf on which they were to sleep; also they sprayed up their sleeves and trouser legs, inside their shirts, and everywhere else they could reach with propriety. The operation was watched with absorbed interest by the local population, and Althea said that they would probably

take it for some religious rite. "Like the burning of incense!" remarked Lanny.

Althea had warned them that they must not be seen to use any medicaments, and, no matter what happened, they must never give any hint that she was a doctor. The word would be spread by their coolies, and all the sick of every village would be brought to them; they would have to use up all their slender stock and there would be no way to replace it. Said she: "The people take it for granted that any American medicine will cure all diseases, and they will take affront if we refuse to help them."

## VI

The capture and execution of the duck was achieved, and they made a very good meal. This was Christmas Day, and Hong-Kong had surrendered, though they did not find it out until later. They counted themselves lucky to be alive, and enjoyed a well-earned Christmas dinner, watched by people who raised fowls but probably did not taste the meat thereof more than once or twice in a year. The adult population did not stand and stare, but glanced furtively, and it was evident that they were talking eagerly about what they saw. Althea said they would be talking about it for a long time to come. Laurel replied: "It is true of us, also; certainly of me." Her sharp eyes were taking in everything, and Lanny guessed that there would some day be stories about Kwangtung Province in American magazines. She would ask her woman companion about the meaning of this and that. They could talk freely, in the certainty that nobody among the spectators would understand a word. Laurel could even say "I adore you" to Lanny—this while Althea was boiling the water and arguing over the price of duck and rice with spices.

The headman of this village came to pay them a courtesy call. He was a short but dignified figure wearing a black moustache in the old drooping style. He spoke a little Mandarin, and said he was the tax collector of the district; they didn't know what his politics might be—there were many parts of the country ruled by semi-independent war lords. So the travellers used President Roosevelt instead of Sun Ching-ling. The official said that President Roosevelt was a great man and when was he going to send help to China? Everybody would ask that, all the way to wherever they went.

The grape-vine had brought two items of news to the village. First, there was a Japanese offensive under way north from Canton, following the railway; and second, there was a great battle being fought at the gates of Changsha, the principal city of what is called

the "rice bowl of China." It lies on the railway that runs from Canton and Hankow through Central China. The Japs were in possession of both ends of the line, and if they came down from the north and up from the south at the same time they would cut Free China into two halves, an eastern and a western.

The significance of this to the refugees was obvious. They had a map with them but didn't need to study it, having done so at Mr. Foo's. Althea's home lay close to the railway, less than a hundred miles south of Changsha, and if the enemy won the battle, there might soon be no mission to go to. The other item of news was no less disturbing, for if the offensive from Canton succeeded, the Japs would cut across the route the Americans were proposing to take. At present they and the Japs were moving northward on parallel lines, the Japs having the advantage of a railway and two rivers, whereas the Americans had only country roads.

They mentioned this fact to the tax collector, Mr. Feng, and his almond eyes twinkled. "You forget," Althea translated, "Japanese have armies facing them at both ends of line. American gentleman and ladies have only friends in all China, help them along fast!" He went on to mention that Changsha had been taken once before by the Japs, but they had been forced to abandon it, and this might happen again. In the end the foe might succeed in taking the entire railway, but it would not be very soon.

Mr. Feng said that the grape-vine had brought the news about the attack on Pearl Harbour, and they understood that the Americans were their full allies at last. Why didn't they come at once? Lanny had to explain that they could not come for a long time, for the Americans were a peaceable people like the Chinese, and it would take time to convert their industry to the ends of war. "Tell him that China must hold out!" To this Mr. Feng replied that China would do so, but it was very hard, because of the scarcity of everything, and their money losing its value.

The official invited them to his home, where they could be made more comfortable; but Althea replied that they had made arrangements at this inn, and if they were now to leave, it would be taken as a discourtesy, a criticism of the service they had received. The other admitted that this was true, and he was impressed by their willingness to live like the Chinese people and share their hardships. He told them the good news that from here on there was a canal. Waterways had been for hundreds of years the principal method of travel in Kwangtung and the boats were comfortable. With this assurance they slept soundly, and to their surprise forgot the hard couch.

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## VII

Their attentive friend had taken their passports, and next morning he came again, returning these, and with them an official-looking paper with Chinese printing and writing on it and those rubber stampings which are common to all lands. It was, he said, a military permit for the three to travel to Hengyang; it would be impossible for them to continue without it. China was at war, and was compelled to keep watch against spies of the Tokyo government, and of its puppet, the Nanking government, and sometimes, alas, of the Yen-an government. How Mr. Feng had got this document he did not say, but he dropped a hint that it was not in his own department, and that he had had not a little difficulty in arranging matters. The doctor whispered to Lanny that Mr. Feng would expect some material thanks, and that one thousand depreciated dollars ought to be about right. Lanny took the gentleman aside and everybody's face was saved. They were glad to have this document, for many times they were stopped by gendarmes and required to show it, and several times they had to stop at police stations and fill out questionnaires.

The journey continued. They were being very aristocratic and having a boat to themselves. It was about fifteen feet long, flat-bottomed; lean, active yellow men propelled it with poles, and never once lost their balance or their amiable expressions. One of them remarked to Althea with a grin: "Beat Japanese Army!"—so evidently Mr. Feng had enlisted their patriotic sentiments. The passengers, reclining luxuriously on wooden couches, surveyed the fields of Kwangtung Province, green in winter.

Rain came up, and at noon they stopped under the shelter of a bullock shed, generously shared by these patient animals. The boatmen ate the bowl of rice which they carried and drank the rain-water which they gathered in their hats—a simple process of turning the hat upside down and standing under it with their mouths wide open to catch the dripping stream. Lanny asked the medical lady if the rain-water of China was apt to be infected with the bacillus of dysentery, and she said no, but the hats surely were. She explained why the coolies did not all die—that those who were subject to the disease had been dying off through the centuries.

The rain ceased, and the sun came out, and then they missed the rain on account of the heat. They adopted as their practice to start the long boat ride at the first streak of dawn, and at noon to find a tea-house or other place where they could rest and perhaps doze under the shelter of reed mats, resuming their journey when the afternoon was half over. They blessed the Chinese tea-houses, which are, as the coffee-houses were in old London and the corner drugstores are in

America, places of congregation and refreshment, where you can meet the people and hear talk. Those in China are larger, because there are more customers; unlike the peasants in the fields, the townsmen appeared to have plenty of leisure, or at any rate they took it. In the shops you would always find more clerks than customers—and far more clerks than articles to be sold, according to Laurel, who hadn't yet got adjusted to life in a world at war. Lanny assured her: "When we get back to America, we may be surprised to discover how much like China it has become!"

They wondered what was happening at home; they wondered what was happening in Britain and in Europe, in Manila and Hong-Kong and Singapore. But they didn't have much chance to think about it; their time and thought went to just keeping alive, to holding themselves above the level of discomfort on which these people lived. Speaking as a physician, Althea said that very few among this human mass were healthy; she pointed out the signs of overwork and undernourishment, and of the painful infections which flourished. To see the people smiling, and grateful for the smallest kindness, was infinitely touching; the superior beings who were passing through, skimming the surface of so much human misery, felt themselves guilty, charged themselves before the bar of their own conscience.

#### VIII

All this time the newly married couple had no privacy whatever. Even when they got a separate room, it was only one, and there was no way to explain that a travelling lord didn't want both his wives in the room with him. To put one of them away by herself would have been to humiliate her, to excite gossip; possibly it might have been unsafe for her. When she went to boil the water, she established herself as Number Two wife; and meantime the lord would sit on a plank beside his fair-haired and very lovely Number One, and smile upon her and say: "I love you." The watching audience could interpret the smile correctly.

"Darling," Lanny would plead, "accustom yourself to public life. You are acting in a play, and the audience is completely absorbed in it."

Hard for a lady from Baltimore, but she realized that it is no fun travelling unless you conform to the customs of the country. So, when they entered a crowded tea-room—men only—she would bow in stage-queen manner and give them a smile of royalty. Then, while the Number Two went about a servant's duties, she would entertain her lord and master with cheerful conversation. When he asked: "Are you happy?" she would reply: "I am alive, and so is my husband."



When he asked solicitously: "Are you feeling all right?" she would say: "I am getting tough. In a little while I'll be ready to take up my bag and walk."

But of course that wouldn't have done in China. Not even a bandit's lady would have behaved so. "And especially not in your condition!" Lanny would say. He ventured to make jokes about it, for after all, she was his wife, though as yet in name only.

Little by little she accustomed herself to the idea that the most public place can be private, if you don't recognize the difference. If Chinese men enjoyed seeing the lovelight in the eyes of a lady from the opposite side of the world, what harm could it do? Maybe it would send them home to be kinder to their own wives. The horror of foot-binding was pretty much ended in China, Althea assured them, but the manifold exploitation of women went on everywhere throughout the Orient. So this pair continued their gentle wooing from one town of Kwangtung to the next, and the spectators gave every sign of finding the performance to their taste.

The land rose as they got farther from the sea, and so they parted from their genial boatmen. The weather stayed almost as hot, but there was less moisture in the air and the mosquitoes were not so numerous. The gentle slopes of the hills were carefully terraced, and the bright green spread of tea-plants delighted the eye. They took to "chairs" again. They rode for a while, then walked for a while; their human beasts of burden walked all the time, and seemed to find it unprecedented that people should use their own legs when they were paying good money for other people's legs. Doubtless the well-to-do Chinese would have told the visitors that they were setting a bad precedent, demoralizing the livery service of the land. The doctor said that missionaries heard the same complaint; they were accused of spreading ideas and stirring up the people—the same charge which had been brought against Jesus, in another land where riches and poverty had dwelt side by side for ages. The complaint against the missionaries was brought with special bitterness by the "old China hands," the whites who had come here to make money and stayed to make more. These held the missions to blame for the revolution, the Reds, and all the turmoil of the past quarter-century.

## IX

In the distance they could see the blue Nan-ling mountains, which form the boundary between Kwangtung and Hunan Provinces. They were told that from the next town a bus line went through these mountains. The bus was always crowded, but in China the poor were put

off, and the rich and important travelled; it had always been that way, and apparently no one thought of changing it. The three had to show their precious military permit; and after it had been inspected and stamped, and they had paid enough paper dollars, a bench was assigned to them, just wide enough for the three to squeeze into. The bus rattled, but it ran; and they were glad, because they had been told that they would have had trouble in finding coolies to take them through the mountains. Not that the burden bearers minded the climb, but they were afraid of bandits, also of demons, which swarm in the wild places.

The foothills were bare of trees and appeared to be grazing land, though there was plenty of rice wherever water was available. They came to a town which appeared as one great market for chickens, brought in from all the countryside. Processions of coolies went by them, laden with baskets and crates full of live hens and roosters: the cackling and crowing in the town added a new note to the racket which is apparently necessary to the happiness of the Chinese populace. The travellers feasted on chicken and rice at a stopping place, and again the bus set out, climbing steadily.

The mountains are not very high, but there are many of them; the trip took a full day, and they saw no bandits, only a squad of government soldiers who had been hunting deserters and were leading a string of them bound with ropes, very miserable-looking fellows. They heard more about the recruiting process; soldiers swooped down on a village and all able-bodied men ran to hide, but some were caught and carried off. The travellers were pained by this sight; a Chinese who didn't love the Chungking government explained that the rich were allowed to buy their way out of military service, and the poor were drafted even when they were not liable by law.

They were surprised to find that there were still forests in the mountains of South China, but the process of stripping them was going on continually. Timber was being cut, and the cutters didn't in the least mind felling a tree across the road and obliging a bus to wait until the debris had been cleared. Cool mountain streams tempted the travellers, but the stern warden of their health forbade them to drink even this water unboiled. For an hour or two they enjoyed bracing cold, and then they were going down into Hunan Province and it was warm again. Twenty-seven million people lived in this province, according to the statistics, but Lanny doubted if anybody had counted them, ever from the beginning of time. In the highlands the peasants grew wheat, groundnuts, and a little tea; lower down it would be rice again—they were on the way to the "rice bowl." To add savour to this number-one food, long trains of bearers carried baskets of coarse salt out of the hills. A stream flowed through the pass, and presently others joined it and there was water enough to float logs.

The trees cut higher up had holes chopped through the end, and were dragged with ropes by a dozen coolies. That was the way you got a telephone or telegraph pole into your rice bowl !

## X

A town of some size, and a tea-house with a wonderful rare treasure—a radio set ! It was old and produced many extra noises, but you could hear broadcasts from Chungking, and Althea translated the news of the world. America was calling for an army of ten million men, and President Roosevelt had promised fifty thousand aeroplanes—many thousands for China. Hong-Kong had surrendered, and Manila was being attacked ; so also the Dutch East Indies. Of more immediate concern, Chungking claimed a great victory at Changsha, the capital city of Hunan Province ; the large and well-mechanized army of the Japanese had been routed and was in part surrounded. Also, the enemy offensive north of Canton had been checked. There was no longer any reason why the tourists should not head westward into the river valley which led to Althea's home. They might even be able to get a ride on the railway which the Japs weren't going to get for some time !

Another crowded bus took them into the valley of the Lui-ho. This was almost civilization compared with the remote country they had crossed ; but they found it no improvement, rather the opposite. They were in the backwash of war ; endless trains of coolies carried supplies southward to the Canton front, while refugees and wounded men came from it ; the sights were the most pitiful they had beheld. Food was scarce, prices higher, shelters more crowded. The river was low and even the smallest boats couldn't get through. As for the railway, their first look was terrifying, the trains were crowded with passengers, inside, outside, and on top. But Althea said : " This is China. We'll get aboard ! "

First they had to report to the military authorities and have their pass checked. Apparently it was in order, and everybody was very polite. Next they found the telegraph office. A curious thing : the operator did not know a word of English, but he was expert in sending the letters of the Morse code. China had an excellent telegraph network, and messages would go by radiogram from Chungking. Lanny filed a cablegram to his father, telling of his escape from Hong-Kong and his marriage, and asking him to notify Beauty, Irma, Rick, and Alston. He wasn't sure if the message would ever arrive, but later on he learned that it had. Althea sent a message to her parents, which, oddly enough, failed to arrive.

They found a good inn, where they got plentiful buckets of hot water and took real baths. In the morning they were "chaired" to the railway station, and Althea conferred with the official in charge. She told him about the important American emissary and paid him the proper *cumshaw*. It was an ancient custom, and when the jam-packed train came in, the stationmaster spoke to the conductor, who came to the American lady and got "his." Apparently he had a compartment which he kept vacant for such emergencies. They were put into it, and the aged train staggered on its way.

With every *li* of the slow progress the air grew cooler, and also the crowds denser. The railway was comparatively new, but the river had been here for ages, and the villages had been strung along it, sometimes with buildings overhanging the banks and always jammed one against the next. Paralleling the river was a highway, less than a dozen feet wide, hardly able to accommodate the human pack-animals going both ways. A town seemed to go on for ever, and perhaps it was more than one town—there was no way to be sure. Sitting by his wife's side, looking out upon all this, Lanny exclaimed: "What a curious thing! You remember I told you about the scenes of China that I watched in a crystal ball?"

"Yes, very well."

"Well, these are the scenes. They are so familiar, I can't get over the feeling that I've been here before."

"When did this begin, Lanny?"

"About three years ago. I stopped experimenting with the crystal ball because I couldn't get anything but China, and I got tired of it."

"That was after the astrologer told you about dying in Hong-Kong?"

"It was soon after, and of course I thought that might account for it—my subconscious mind had got a powerful impulse, and proceeded to put together everything I had read about this country. Now the correspondences keep striking me: these roads crowded with traffic, and the loads hanging from men's shoulders; the carved gates across the road, the houses with curved double roofs, the square watch towers, the tall pagodas, like one roofed building on top of another. I even saw some of the men crippled and wounded."

"But you knew that China was at war, Lanny!" She was so anxious that they should not fool themselves.

"I know. We can never be sure about it. But it's so vivid, I can't get over the feeling."

"Yes, but it's that way with dreams. Think how often our subconscious mind makes up elaborate fantasies, and when we wake up we have a hard time realizing that it didn't happen. I have spent half

a morning trying to convince myself that some unpleasant thing was entirely imaginary."

" Help me to wake up now ! " he replied with a smile.

## XI

The overloaded train delivered them after dark at the overloaded city of Hengyang, formerly Hengchow. A heavy rain had come up, but they disregarded it because they were so near their destination. They had a roll of money, and " money will make the mare to go," and likewise all her Chinese substitutes. Six " chairmen " were found, marvellous beings who took them along at what was almost a dog-trot, shouting to those who blocked the narrow way and sometimes elbowing them. The language was Mandarin now, and Althea said they were commanding: " Make way for the American lord ! "

They had bought themselves Chinese gowns made of quilted cotton, as protection against the chill of night—for this was the month of January, and cold winds sometimes came from far-off Siberia. When the robes got wet they became very heavy and sagged out of shape, but the travellers refused to seek shelter. Althea had not seen her parents for several years, and was greatly excited. The coolies raced, because they knew the neighbourhood and could be sure that a hot meal awaited them at the mission. " Me Christian man," said one of them, proudly; Althea told her friends sadly that he was probably a " rice Christian," one who professed religion in order to be fed.

They trotted up the slope on which the mission was situated. They arrived long after dark, so Lanny saw only the vague outlines of several buildings. In front of the cottage which had been Althea's home since childhood she raised a shout, and the door was opened and light streamed forth, and there came running a thin, grey-haired lady and clasped a soggy bundle of daughter in her arms, crying with relief and happiness—they had given her up for lost in Hong-Kong.

A tall elderly gentleman followed, carrying a flashlight, and they all came under the shelter of the porch for introductions. While the father put on his raincoat and led the coolies to another building where they would be fed and sheltered, Althea and Laurel were led upstairs to divest themselves of their raiment. A sorry sight they were, with clothing out of shape and wet hair straggling into their eyes. A funny scene, too, when they divested themselves of their " unchastity belts " and explained the phenomenon to the startled mother.

There was a bathtub in this house, and they took turns. Lanny had a shave—he had grown a beard, and looked comical to himself, and alarming to his bride. Then, clean and warm in comfortable dressing-

gowns, they had a hot meal of American foods—no rice, please ! While eating they took turns telling their adventures. The parents had received a letter from Althea in Baltimore, saying that she was coming on the *Oriole*; they had heard nothing since. They had heard the name of Laurel Creston, but never that of Mr. Lanny Budd, who now turned up as a bridegroom of one lady and rescuer of both. Being old-fashioned people, they gave full credit to the man.

There could hardly have been a happier party in all China than in the home of Dr. John Taney Carroll that night. He was a Carroll of Carrollton, it appeared, and the name was on the Declaration of Independence. He was a sternly conscientious man—one didn't come to a part of the world like this without deep convictions; he worked a ten-hour day at a clinic here and at another down in the city, and whatever reward he received would have to be in Heaven, surely not in Hengyang. The mother was a devoted soul who shared her husband's every thought, and had brought up three children to follow in his footsteps. In short, it was a Christian home in the good sense of a much-abused phrase. Lanny wished there might be more of them in various parts of the earth that he had visited. He told himself that he would be willing to accept the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, if men couldn't find any other basis for practising brotherhood.

## XII

The bride and groom having been married by Episcopalian authority, it was proper that their union should be consummated under the same auspices. For two weeks they had never been alone; now they found themselves in a guest-room with lace curtains in the windows, covers on the tables, a "splasher" on the wall behind the washstand—in short, all the little elegancies of a middle-class home of thirty years ago, including freshly ironed sheets and pillow-cases on the bed. To that place of almost unimaginable luxury Lanny led his newly won treasure; he sat by her side, took her hands in his, and looked into bright brown eyes which revealed the intelligence behind them—and also now a little fear.

"I will be gentle and kind," he said. "I will find out what makes you happy, and I will do that and nothing else. That goes for to-night and all other nights and days as well." This was a sort of supplement to the marriage service, what the churchmen call a work of supererogation.

On that long journey Lanny might have sought occasion to claim what the world called his "marital rights"; but it would have distressed his bride greatly, amid the dirt and discomfort of a primitive

world. He had known this, and his consideration had touched her deeply. Now she answered: "My heart is yours, Lanny. I trust you as I have never trusted anyone since I was a child—when I trusted everybody."

"Tell me this," he continued. "Do you want to have a child?"

"I always thought that I never would; but I should love to have your child."

"It will interfere very much with writing," he warned.

"I can arrange it. I have thought about it a lot."

"You will find that America is at war—all-out war, be certain. Help will be hard to get."

"I'll find somebody, don't worry."

"Darling, I must be honest with you. When I get back home, some job will be assigned me. I have tried to figure out what it will be, but I can't. It may take me away from you for long periods; and it may be dangerous."

"That is all the more reason for having your child, and not delaying about it. Let us be happy while we can."

He kissed her, and put his newly shaven cheek against hers and whispered: "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may, old time is still a-flying." The rhyme was "dying," so he didn't complete the stanza; instead, he told her: "I have found the right woman, and I am going to make her happy."

"You must be happy, too, dear," she countered. "I don't want to be a selfish wife."

"Don't have any worry about that," he answered. "I have been lonely for a long time, and now I have exactly what I want." He smiled, close to her lips, "All you have to do is to guide me, and I will be the perfect lover!"

### XIII

In the morning they inspected the mission plant. There was a school, a dispensary and small hospital, a dining-hall and kitchen, a laundry, and cottages for those in charge and dormitories for the men and the women workers: a little unit of American civilization picked up and deposited in the middle of this ancient neglected land. *Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui* was its name. Lanny had heard the missionaries sneered at because they lived according to American standards; but having tried the other course, he was certain that no American could live as the Chinese masses lived and at the same time carry on intellectual or professional work. He soon observed that all these people were thin; with the rise in prices, their small salaries were losing value and nobody was getting enough to eat.

Lanny talked with some of the Chinese, and wondered how many of them were "rice Christians." He couldn't enter into their hearts, of course, but he could see that they had learned English more or less well, and many could read it. They had learned to keep clean, and to use modern machinery. They didn't have to be taught to work hard, for everybody in the Far East did that, excepting the very rich and the depraved, the opium addicts, the gamblers, and other parasites. The mission converts learned that there was such a thing as an ideal of altruism, and they at least paid the tribute which vice pays to virtue.

The visitor's greatest surprise came from the political atmosphere which he discovered prevailing in this mission. He was used to thinking of the Episcopal Church as a refuge, perhaps the last refuge, of a gentle and refined conservatism. It had been that in Newcastle, and still more on the French Riviera; all the "best people" attended, together with their doctors and lawyers and trades people—often for business reasons—and their carefully selected governesses and secretaries and maids. Hardly anybody else attended, and if you had taken these away there wouldn't have been any church. But here Lanny discovered that the prevailing tone of the mission was Pink and there were spots of bright Red. He wondered, had the ancient Chinese succeeded in teaching their teachers? Or could it be that daily contact with the poverty of the East had brought the Church of Jesus back to the state of mind of its Founder, who had Himself lived under much the same conditions?

Whatever the reason, the bishop of this diocese, with headquarters in Hankow, had become during forty-two years of service an out-and-out sympathizer with the masses in their revolt against landlords and moneylenders. He had become convinced that the so-called "Christian generals" who had been chopping off the heads of thousands of Communists were not ideal representatives of the lowly Nazarene. Bishop Roots had retired three or four years ago, but his portrait, showing a rotund, bald, and very determined cleric, still hung in the main hall of the mission and his spirit still dominated the institution. He had announced himself a "Christian revolutionary," and had invited so many of the hated Reds to take shelter in his home that his enemies had dubbed the place "the Moscow-Heaven Axis."

## XVI

The priest of this mission was an elderly Chinese, Dr. Yi Yuan-tsai; a kindly, wise, and devout maker of Christian converts. To him Lanny explained the circumstances of his marriage in Hong-Kong, and his desire that it should have that legal validity which had not been obtain-



able under the guns of the Japanese. Dr. Yi assured him that under Chinese law he possessed full authority to perform the ceremony, and that its validity would be recognized by the allied government of the United States of America. So the couple stood up in the home of the Carrolls, and in the presence of that family renewed their pledges. Lanny sent another wireless message to his father, explaining the circumstances—for Robbie was the one who must have this matter clear, in the event that the fates which had missed Lanny in Hong-Kong were to get him anywhere on the way home.

They had a short-wave radio set at their service now and could get the news of the world and be sure of it. Always when he turned a dial, Lanny's first thought was of the atomic bomb. Would it be Berlin, or London, or New York? But no, it was just the old routine, the operation of the military meat-grinder. The Germans had had to give up efforts to take Moscow that winter, but they had taken Rostov, at the eastern end of the Black Sea, and that was serious because it was so close to the oil of the Caucasus. The Japanese were coming down on Singapore, amazing the world by the speed with which they moved in what were supposed to be impenetrable jungles. They had taken the Solomons, those cannibal islands through which the *Oriole* had passed; the cannibals wouldn't be of any use to them, but they had that fine harbour of Tulagi, and were on their way to Australia, or Pearl Harbour, or both.

Their armies in China had been definitely checked at Changsha in the north and on the Canton front in the south, which meant a respite for the missionaries. But it could be only temporary, for manifestly the Japanese had to have that railway, the only north and south line through the country. They would continue to send reinforcements, and to attack. The missionaries confronted the dreadful prospect of having to leave this place and emigrate to the west. How were they to do it, with such poor means of transport? Some fifty million Chinese had already done it, leaving everything except what they could carry in wheelbarrows or on their backs. There had been no such mass migration in history—and it was still going on, impelled by the continuing atrocities of the Japanese.

xv

In Lanny Budd's Pink days, a dozen years ago, he had been browsing in the Rand School bookstore and had picked up *Daughter of Earth*, by Agnes Smedley, of whom he had heard. He read the extraordinary life story of a child born to a large family of American poor whites, and dragged from one part of the land to another in unending wretched-

ness. She had managed to pick up bits of education and had become a school teacher, and then a rebel propagandist and friend of the oppressed of all lands. Travelling to China as a journalist, she had made the cause of the Chinese workers her own, and had travelled with the Red Army and broadcast its story to the world.

Lanny and Laurel had already heard about this army from Sun Ching-ling: how the workers and peasants had risen against the landlords and moneylenders and established a government according to the Three People's Principles. The Kuomintang government under the control of Madame Sun's brother-in-law, the Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, had set out to put this rebel government down by mass slaughter; the result had been the famous Long March; a great army had emigrated to the north-west, a distance as great as across the United States. Now they were established just south of the Great Wall, and there was a truce between them and the Chungking government while they fought the Japanese. The Reds were known as the Eighth Route Army; and in the library of the mission was another book by Agnes Smedley, *China Fights Back*, telling the story of her travels and adventures with this army in the early campaigns, now four years in the past.

Althea, being a consecrated soul, had gone to work without even one day's rest; but the other two were leisure-class people who had a right to play—and besides, they were on their honeymoon. What more pleasant way to spend it than to read about other people's heroism? Agnes Smedley, with a seriously injured back, always in pain, had walked or ridden on horseback through a region where the most elementary necessities were not to be obtained. "There are no nails, no oil or fat, no salt, no fuel for fire. I shall be writing in the dead of winter without a blaze to warm me. And (need I tell you?) without sufficient food. Our food even now in the autumn is rice, or millet as a base, with one vegetable. To-day it was turnips, and yesterday it was turnips. Sometimes we have no vegetables at all."

Such was the price which the masses of China were paying for freedom, and which an American sympathizer paid in order to report their sacrifices. A woman with an injured back carried her typewriter strapped to it because she was afraid to overload the one horse and one mule which carried the supplies of her party. "If my horse or mule should die, I am lost," she wrote; and concluded: "I am not complaining when I write all this. These are the happiest, most purposeful days of my life. I prefer one bowl of rice a day and this life to all that 'civilization' has to offer me. I prefer to walk and ride with an injured back that would take six months to heal even if I should stay in bed."

Lanny and Laurel took turns reading the book aloud; and when

they finished, the bride said: "We ought to go and see those things, Lanny; it would be a crime to be so near and pass them by."

"It sounds near, but it isn't, darling. It's as far as from New York to Chicago, and there are no railways for a good part of the way."

"I know, but we ought to get there. Somebody ought to write about what's happening now." They knew that Agnes Smedley's health had broken under the strain and she was back in her native land.

"It would be a hard journey," he warned. "Conditions can't be any better than they were four years ago. They are probably worse."

"Yes, but we could take supplies. I suppose there is some way you could draw on your bank at home. We could get warm clothing. Many people have taken such trips, even in winter."

"It seems a dubious sort of way to start a baby, darling."

"It would only be a question of the first months. We wouldn't have to stay long—I am quick at getting impressions and making notes of what I need."

"And what about your novel?"

"I won't forget it. I'd just write a few articles about China. Maybe I couldn't get anything printed, but I'd like to try."

"I hate to take you into any more danger, Laurel——"

"I know—you bold brave man, you want to walk into danger yourself and leave your delicate charmer at home. But you call yourself a feminist, and that means that women demand their share of the bad as well as the good."

This was hardly to be disputed, and Lanny said: "All right. If that's what you want, we'll talk it over with the two doctors and see if they think it can be done." He meant the father and daughter, with whom he had already discussed the idea of going out by way of Chungking. It might be that as far as danger was concerned there wasn't much to choose between the two routes. They would have to fly from Chungking, and that means over the "Hump," the most dangerous bit of air in the world. "If we go by the north," he suggested, "we might get a plane to Russia."

"The Moscow-Heaven Axis in reverse," smiled Laurel.

The husband, swapping wisecracks, remarked: "I have a title for your first book. *The Red Honeymoon!*"

## 26

*Hope Springs Eternal*

## I

THE elder Dr. Carroll threw buckets of cold water over the project of a trip to Yen-an. "Utterly out of the question!" he said, and explained that the difficulties were not so much of distance and weather as they were military and political. Free China was divided into two parts: the Communists, in the north, known as the "Border Government," and those at Chungking, the "Central Government," headed by the Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. There was a truce between them while they fought the Japanese enemy, but it was like a forced marriage and nobody could guess how long it would endure. The group of money-minded men about the Generalissimo hated and feared the Reds, and could not endure to see them win a victory, even over the foreign foe. The Gissimo kept several hundred thousand of his best troops deployed along the border between the two governments, maintaining the strictest sort of blockade.

"If you go to Chungking," declared the doctor, "you will surely not be permitted to travel to Yen-an; the mere request would cause you to be marked as dangerous characters, and you would probably not get to travel anywhere. Nor can you travel toward Yen-an from here; you would be halted at ever military post."

"Couldn't we get up some pretext that would take us near Yen-an?"

"Even if you did, you couldn't cross the border."

"You mean there is no intercourse whatever?"

"No trade is allowed; but sometimes there is officially sanctioned exchange of products. They need our rice, and we need their oil and other products."

"What would happen if we were caught trying to get smuggled across?"

"The Chinese who helped you would be promptly shot; and you yourselves would be taken to the headquarters of General Hu Tsung-nan. He is a very charming little gentleman—was one of the Gissimo's fellow-students at the Whampoa Military Academy and commands his choicest crack troops—so precious that they have never yet been used against the Japs."

"And what will he do to us?"

"He will no doubt have delightful chats with you, since he is interested in the outside world and misses it in the lonely barren country where he is stationed. He will consider you two greatly misguided souls, and will endeavour to persuade you of the error of your notions regarding China. But I hardly think he will put you in one of his reform schools."

"Oh!—he has reform schools?"

"A polite name he gives to his concentration camps. He is disturbed because so many of the young people from our best families have heard about the work the Border Government is doing, especially the universities for both boys and girls. They want to go there and study—even if they have to walk all the way. General Hu's soldiers catch them and they are put in schools and taught what wicked ideas the Reds hold, and they are not let loose until the authorities are convinced they are completely cured."

"A curious thing," remarked Lanny, "how the world has become the same everywhere. I know of labour schools in several parts of England and America, and some of our best families would like to do exactly that with sons and daughters who take an interest in them."

"It would appear that the same forces are at work," replied the other. "I don't know much about politics myself. I don't have time to study it."

"Tell me this, Doctor. What will General Hu do if he should find that he cannot convert us?"

"He will doubtless send you to Chungking, and they will make another attempt."

"And then?"

"They are polite to Americans, and especially to those who have money and might command publicity. They will let you stay, and set spies to watch your every move. Anybody who talks to you will be marked for life; so pretty soon you will ask to be helped on your way and they will help you."

"That doesn't sound so very bad," commented Lanny. "What do you say, Laurel?"

"I want very much to try it," remarked the spunky lady. "We must promise never to tell anybody that Dr. Carroll gave us encouragement."

There was a twinkle in the doctor's tired grey eyes.

They spent a couple of weeks at the mission, resting and discussing the problem of their next move. It was a great temptation to choose

the easy way. There was a commercial airline to Chungking, and they could take a plane, fly out by way of Calcutta, and be at home, perhaps in a week. No more dirt, no more discomfort, no more water boiling! But Laurel wanted to see the future, and make sure whether it really worked. She wasn't satisfied with the suggestion of the two doctors, that she visit some of the Red "islands" which were closer to them. These were great tracts where the Japs had never penetrated, and where the Communists held complete sway; one was near Hengyang, another near Canton—they had passed along its borders. But the writer said, No, to get any real material she would have to visit headquarters, the intellectual centre. She was lured by the fact that no journalists had been there for a couple of years; and also by the fact that Lanny thought he could get into the Soviet Union.

Little by little the son of Budd-Erling discovered what it was going to be like, having a literary lady for a wife. She wasn't going to give up her work, apparently that possibility hadn't crossed her mind. She was a "born writer," and went to her job in the same way that a humming bird goes to flowers, or to a saucer of sugar water if one is provided. A mission of the Protestant Episcopal Church of America in the rice bowl of China was a large platter to her, and she was on the wing all day. The students and teachers, the nurses and other workers, were glad to talk with her; the Americans were reminded of home, and the Chinese wanted to practise English; all were made happy by the idea of being written about. "A chiel's amang ye, takin' notes"—a female chiel in this case, and in faith she would "prent it." She shut herself up in a room with one of the mission typewriters and typed out the notes. One set she would put in an envelope and entrust to Althea to be mailed to New York—for mail was still going, by way of Chungking; the other set she would carry on her journey. She asked Lanny to help recall the details of life in Hong-Kong and on the way to the mission, and he typed that for her. She had more than one use for a husband, it appeared.

Lanny didn't mind, for he had more than one use for a wife. He had been brought up as a little ladies' man, and thought it was all right being managed when he had the right manager. He found what Laurel wrote worth while, and he was pleased to look at China through her keen eyes. In fact, this was what he had been asking for; he had seen Germany through her eyes, and the Coast of Pleasure, and London and New York; he had imagined himself looking at the whole United States, going to and coming from Hollywood. Now he would look at Red China, then at Red Russia, and it would all be according to plan. When he had recited the marriage service, for better, for worse, he had really meant it—but of course he meant it for better!

Althea's mother, keeping the dark secret, cut open those "un-

chastity belts " with her own scissors and took out the gold coins. She had to admit that the idea was a clever one, so she made a clean specimen for Laurel to wear on the new journey—deducting only a few coins which the newlyweds insisted upon paying for their bed and board at the mission. Lanny got more money by the simple device of giving Dr. Carroll, senior, a cheque on a New York bank; in view of the war situation the physician said that he would rather have his savings in his home country. Lanny agreed that if he reached New York before the cheque came through, he would put the money to the doctor's account and stop payment on the cheque.

### III

They announced that they wished to try the venture, and so the elder doctor undertook to find the right sort of Chinese-speaking guide. Presently he produced a wiry black-haired little fellow of thirty or so, by the name of Han Hua. He spoke English of a mixed-up sort, and was obviously intelligent; the doctor said he was honest and would do whatever he agreed to.

Lanny and Laurel proceeded to interview him to find out if he was the proper person for them, and presently they realized that Han was interviewing *them*, in order to judge whether they were proper persons to be received by the Border Government. Lanny, experienced in intrigue, decided that he was some kind of agent; he never did tell what he was doing, but they guessed it had something to do with propaganda. The Gissimo's friends resented the fact that the Reds carried on propaganda within Central Government territory, and they called it a violation of the truce. But Han said that the Chungking crowd was carrying on only a half-way war against the Japs; their troops didn't know what it was all about, and had to be kidnapped and forced to fight. The Border Government educated its people, and anybody who absorbed its ideas became a volunteer, ready to give his life for the cause of true and complete freedom. Wasn't that helpful, even among the Gissimo's own men?

Lanny guessed that a dossier was being prepared upon himself and wife, and he went back to the manners and language of his old Pink days. He told how he had helped to finance a labour school on the French Riviera, and another in Berlin; how he had been put out of Italy more than seventeen years ago for trying to send out of the country the facts about the murder of the Socialist Matteotti. He said that he was a personal friend of President Roosevelt and was going to make a report to him on present conditions in both Red republics. He guessed that Han wouldn't believe this, but he would

know that it was a good story, calculated to grease the wheels. By a happy thought Lanny mentioned that he had read *Daughter of Earth* some years ago, and they had just been reading aloud Comrade Smedley's newest book about China. By the time he finished this discourse, the Chinese Red was completely warmed up, and said he thought it would be "good good thing" if this American couple would learn to know the new world of the north, and report it correctly to the American people.

"But how can we get a permit to travel to the border?" demanded Lanny.

Han wasn't so discouraging as the elderly doctor. He said that the underground had various ways of arranging such matters; their representatives had to travel, and they did. Of course it wouldn't be so easy with white people, who couldn't be disguised. It might be a question of buying a permit from some local official of the Chungking government. Han explained that the Communists had abolished corruption, by applying the death penalty; but Chungking was riddled with it, and, naturally, the Reds took advantage of the fact, in defending themselves against the cruel blockade which kept out even American medical goods. Han said at a guess that for two thousand Chinese dollars he could get them a valid permit to travel to South Shensi, where the Reds could take charge of them and smuggle them across the border by night.

Lanny was agreeable to this proposal, and added that he would be glad to pay this class-conscious agent another two thousand to act as guide and interpreter on the trip. That wasn't any bribe, for Lanny assumed that Han would be acting with the approval of his superiors, or of his group, which, no doubt, was working in Hengyang at risk of life.

Han returned after a couple of days and reported that his "friends" had approved the proposal and that the travel permit could be obtained. So then came a busy period of preparation. They bought long sheep-skin coats with wool inside, and woollen underclothing and socks. They filled their duffelbags with all the comforts needed for a long and uncertain journey. In the great city of Hengyang you could buy anything, it appeared, if you knew where to go and let a Chinese do the bargaining. Generally the price would be cut by two-thirds, but don't imagine that you could do that off-hand, and without a lot of arguing back and forth.

Their kind host provided them with a letter to the head of a mission in Hupeh Province, more than half-way to their goal; this would serve as "cover," in the event that their purposes were closely questioned. The doctor said that the Hupeh mission might be able to provide them with some pretext for continuing on in the territory con-



trolled by the polite and cultured General Hu Tsung-nan. "Do whatever Han tells you," said the elder Dr. Carroll, with one of those eye twinkles they had learned to recognize. "He has very useful connections."

#### IV

Bright and early one morning towards the end of January the expedition set forth. Althea and Laurel dropped tears, for they had become warm friends; they promised to write to each other as soon as it was possible, and Laurel promised to take over the water-boiling ritual. All supplies had been provided, all debts paid, and a new life was beginning, a new world opening up. Laurel looked picturesque in sheepskin trousers, seated in her palanquin; the whole mission turned out to see her off and shout and sing good-bye. She had made people love her, and they were certain that by the power of her pen she was going to bring American aid to China immediately upon her arrival.

The first stage of their journey was by a small steamer down the Siang River, and their first destination was the mountain resort of Hengshan, close to the river. Lanny didn't wish to forget entirely that he was an art expert, and he wanted to be able to produce evidence of such activity when questioned by the military. There were ancient art objects at Hengshan, which had been the favourite resort of the highly cultivated poet-emperor, Chien Lung, of the eighteenth century. A bus carried them up to the place, and they spent that night in a comfortable inn.

They were on their way into the rice bowl. Changsha lay less than a day's journey ahead, but that city had been wrecked and was still being bombed by the frustrated Japs, so they would turn off to the north-west, by the shores of the great lake of Tung-ting. This lake and a chain of others form a sort of reservoir of the Yangtse River which cuts across China from east to west. The river and the lakes form the rice bowl; their marshy shores are like the delta of the Nile and that of the Mississippi. In rainy weather the causeways called roads are all but impassable; you would slip off them or get stuck in them. That was what had defeated the Japanese invader in the great battle of Changsha which had just been fought. Those storms which had made things so uncomfortable for the American trio had saved the rice bowl for Free China.

Now the sun smiled on them, and they took off their sheepskin coats and laid them across their laps. The bus was the best they had yet seen in China, and while it was jammed, the polite passengers showed their respect for President Roosevelt by avoiding to crowd the American tourists. They gazed on endless rice fields—nearly always small plots,

cultivated with the endless personal care of a land where human labour is the cheapest of all commodities. Each step they took carried them farther from the equator and nearer to the Arctic ice cap; for that, too, they could find compensation—the big black mosquitoes would be fewer, and soon would be gone entirely.

Many rivers flow into Tung-ting, and all those on the south and west had to be crossed. At the biggest river they changed buses; the passengers crossed on small ferry-boats, using sails, poles, and long four-man sculls; it took a lot of time and also of yelling. The Chinese apparently could not work together without a great deal of noise, and making it seemed to be one of their greatest pleasures in life. They all wanted to talk to the Americans, and Han was eager to assist. One of the early Christian fathers had said that when he was in Rome he did as the Romans did; and on this principle Laurel would carry on conversations with the interpreter's help. Han would talk loudly, for the benefit of the whole bus, and Laurel did not rebuke him, because she saw what pleasure it gave to all. When she asked the man why the Chinese always shouted, he told her the custom had been started by an emperor who was suspicious of his subjects and decreed the death penalty for anybody observed to be whispering.

## V

Han Hua was a part of China, and they studied him all the way. He was incessantly talkative, and delighted to tell the story of his life. He had been born a peasant in the south, a district where the wealthy landlords had named the magistrate. Little Han had heard of the concept of justice—he called it *cheng yi*—but he had seen very little of it in action. At the age of thirteen he had joined the Red Army, and there had begun to pick up an education. He had learned to read and write, and since then had read every scrap of printed material he could get hold of. His present employers soon realized that one of his reasons, perhaps the principal reason for taking this job, was the chance it offered to improve his English. It wasn't long before Lanny was saying to his wife—in French—that the only fault he had to find with the Red regime of China was that it caused Han Hua to ask so many questions.

Truly embarrassing questions! Was everybody in America as rich and beautiful as in the movies they sent to the Far East? And was it true that everybody had a vote—or were there Negroes who weren't allowed to vote? And was it true that the police ever beat up strikers, after the fashion which Han had seen in Old China? And why was it that the South, most revolutionary part of China, was the least revolu-

tionary part of the United States? And why had the Americans sold scrap iron and oil to the Japs when it had been so obvious that the Japs were going to use the stuff against America? And how did it happen that the Americans had no language of their own? And why were there so many strange ways of spelling words? How could it be that "through" didn't rhyme with "rough"? To say nothing of "plough" and "cough" and "hiccough"! Lanny had to admit that many things in the Englishman's language could have been improved. Han said he was glad that matters had been arranged more sensibly in Mandarin.

This secret agent of revolution would get hold of a newspaper in towns through which they passed. (Lanny was astonished to learn that there were some sixteen hundred newspapers published in Free China at war.) He would read a paragraph and then turn round and tell his employers what it said. If it was news from home he would explain it, and if it was news from abroad he would ask them to explain it. Sitting in an inn waiting for their food, he would require Lanny to draw him a map showing the states of the United States, and he would write down populations and data such as that; he would cherish those scraps of paper to study. But why did American states have such queer names as Massachusetts and Connecticut? And why did Americans eat so much food? A Chinese worker could get more out of one grain of rice than an American could get out of a handful of wheat.

In short, here was the proletariat in process of awakening, in the rice bowl of China as in the bread basket of the Ukraine and among the sharecroppers of Arkansas and Oklahoma. "Workers of all countries, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains; you have a world to win!" Han Hua was Red China in miniature; and as he came to know his employers better and to understand that, fabulously rich though they were, they were yet willing to see the land owned by those who worked it and the tools of industry owned by those who used them, he opened his heart and provided "Mary Morrow" with so many stories and picturesque phrases that she couldn't find time enough to jot them down.

Six times in one day, at bus stops, the vehicle had to wait while gendarmes or officials inspected that marvellous document which Han Hua had obtained for two thousand of the dollars called "CN"—for "Chinese National"—equivalent to a hundred real dollars at the start of the journey and to less at its end. Once the three had to fill out elaborate questionnaires—the bus didn't mind waiting. Lanny, of course, was the art expert from Connecticut, U.S.A., a refugee from Hong-Kong, and deeply interested in the ancient art of China. He had found a book in Hengyang, and provided himself with a list of the treasures he hoped to inspect in the districts to which he was travelling.

Nobody ever failed to be polite, especially to the so obviously pregnant wife. Both husband and wife got used to the routine of inspection, and took to keeping the score; before they dived underground in the mountains of South Shensi, they had produced their passports and permits a total equal exactly to the number of weeks in that year !

## VI

They were approaching the great Yangtse River, called the Son of the Sea. The river comes down from the western highlands through a great chain of gorges, and at the foot of the gorges is the city of Ichang, where in old days all freight had had to be trans-shipped into special vessels built to run the rapids. Now Ichang was in the hands of the Japs, and all efforts of the Chinese to retake it had failed. Below the city were stretches of the river across which smuggling was continually going on, but Han said he would be afraid to take his party across by that route. The Japs took no prisoners in this war, and they would especially enjoy getting some Americans to torture.

The Americans agreed that they preferred to face the perils of Nature. They hired a Ford car of the "tin Lizzie" era and headed to the west, into the mountains through which the great chasm has been cut: mountains denuded of trees, and terraced wherever there was a drop of moisture to be found. Han said that the farmers caught the rain in cisterns and ladled it onto their plants at night. Rains came now, most inopportunately; they drove with care on slippery mountain trails along the edges of high cliffs. There was traffic everywhere in China, it appeared, and when there was no room for passing, Han would sternly command the other parties to back up, and they would obey. Later he revealed that he had issued the commands in the name of the United States of America !

They came in sight of the famous gorges, and here was one of the most extraordinary spectacles that had ever confronted the eyes of the much-travelled Lanny Budd. It was as if a giant machine had come and cut a huge crevasse, half a mile deep and a hundred miles long, through these mountain masses; and then a swarm of human ants had come and covered the walls with themselves and their constructions. Where the wall was too steep for them to climb from the surging river they had come down from above. They had cut pathways along the cliffs and dug caves in them. Wherever there was a lump of earth they had built a wall about it and planted food. Where there was no earth they had brought it in baskets and built or dug rock basins to hold it. The caves were their homes, and outside they toiled every hour of daylight, constructing vegetable patches where you would have

expected to find the nests of eagles and fish hawks. When the travellers came into sight of this gorge they looked across to the opposite face and saw it like a city turned up on end. The trails which led up into passes through the mountains had been planted on the sides, and looked like shafts of green, even at the beginning of February.

The party descended through such a trail, and when they came to the bottom they found a town strung along the water's edge. As soon as the high waters of summer receded, the peasants rushed to the new soil and planted it. If there came an unseasonable flood their labour would be swept away, and they, too, not infrequently. Few Chinese of the peasant class knew how to swim, and Lanny doubted if many of them had ever heard of such a possibility; if they fell into water and there was nothing to catch hold of, they drowned. Han said that in the old days of commerce through the gorges there had been special boats going up and down to pick up the corpses; they would tie a rope around the neck of each and tow it; when they had accumulated a sufficient bunch they would tow it to the burial grounds.

The Japanese command of the foot of the gorges had caused the direction of traffic to change and it was now crossways to the river. At the town strung along the water's edge they found crowds of people waiting for barges or junks to take them across the fast stream. When Lanny saw the number who intended to pile onto such a craft he refused to trust the life of his partner to it, and insisted in plutocratic fashion upon hiring a private barge. He and Laurel sat in a dirty and depressing tea-house while Han carried on the shouted negotiations which were necessary to this deal; Lanny had told the guide to pay the price and save time, but apparently this was a violation of conscience to a Chinese. A proper bargain had to be struck.

At last they were loaded and cast forth upon the tide. Six sturdy yellow men, naked save for loincloths, sculled and rowed with long oars and desperate concentration. They were swept far downstream; when they reached the opposite bank the men produced boat hooks, caught whatever objects they could find, and toilsomely pulled the craft foot by foot against the current. That was the way the gorges of the Yangtse had been ascended ever since men had discovered them and before they had discovered the power of steam.

The travellers were put ashore at the proper spot, the agreed price was paid, and they hired another car which chugged painfully up a steep trail. They spent their first night in the province of Hupeh very uncomfortably in a stone hut, along with goats and donkeys and all the smells of China. A good part of the fleas of China were present, also, but the humans had magic against these and kept themselves well powdered. The peasant who maintained this so-called inn told them through the interpreter many fearsome tales about the wizards who

dwelt in these Lan-shan—the second word meaning mountains. It had been an especially powerful wizard who made the gorge which they had just crossed; he had done it by blowing with his nostrils, and that was why it was known as the Wind-box gorge. It was these wizards who sent the floods and destroyed the works of man; they were in league with the great water dragons which had their palaces in the deep pools and under the black rocks of the river bed.

## VII

There are many mountains in the province of Hupeh, and the farther north the explorers went the more they needed their sheepskin coats. Their backs became toughened, and they grew used to being swayed back and forth by the bumping of an aged car. They learned to eat what they could get, mostly rice, eggs, and stored vegetables, washed down by tea made from their boiled water and no sugar. Presently they came to another great east and west river which had to be crossed; it was called the Han, and they asked playfully if it had been named for one of their guide's ancestors. He grinned and informed them that "Han" was an alternative word for "Chinese."

Just north of here was the mission to which they had a letter. It proved to be a small place, but it made them welcome and afforded them an opportunity to get clean. They took their hosts into their confidence; these people had no sympathy with the Border Government, but accepted the statement that their fellow-countrymen were getting material for a report to Washington. They thought it a strange mission for a pregnant woman—and Laurel did not share her secret with them. They gave the party a letter to another mission farther north, and warned them that after that stage they would be approaching the territory of General Hu, and it would be imperative for them to travel only at night.

From the next town there was a bus line, going north; and so they rolled on through the dirt and misery of war-torn China. "Beyond the Eight Horizons," was the native phrase. This country had been fought over, back and forth, ever since the overthrow of the Manchu Empire a generation ago. This was the China that Lanny had read about: bare, deforested mountains and dust-blown slopes of yellow loess long since deprived of fertility. Peasants still toiled for an existence in the hills, but the wealth was confined to the river valleys, and these were exposed to incessant floods.

They came to the next mission, which proved to belong to the unorthodox Seventh Day Adventists. The party had the bad luck to

arrive on Friday evening, when men and women had become gloomy and were walking humbly before their God. But that did not prevent them from receiving the travellers, feeding them, and giving what advice they could. All shades of political opinion were the same in the Lord's eyes, they reported, but this was not so in the eyes of General Hu, therefore they requested anyone who was bound for Yen-an to leave the mission before morning.

Han set forth to find some friends of his, meaning, of course, his Party's underground committee; he came back to report that he had a safe hiding place. They set out before dawn, and were led into a mountain gorge, and in its recesses they found caves with peasant families. The Americans had been assured that caves, if they were dry, could be warm and comfortable; this one had the customary *k'ang* along one wall, an earthen shelf on which they could sleep and wait for the next night. A Chinese family continued its life as if there were no visitors present.

From that time on the party belonged to the Red underground. They travelled only by night, over all sorts of country, including steep mountain trails where they trusted their lives to the instincts of tough little ponies. Many travellers were on these trails, most of them with heavy loads. Mysterious figures appeared and disappeared in darkness. Perhaps they were smugglers, perhaps soldiers; nobody asked any questions. Han would produce some local guide, and that guide would deliver them at a place where they and others would spend a day sleeping and eating, but doing very little talking. Han would report to his boss that he had paid so many paper dollars for various services—a cup of tea cost two dollars now—and Lanny would hand him another bundle. Han would report that they were so many *li*—about a third of a mile—nearer to Yen-an, and Lanny would take the liberty of not being certain about that.

## VIII

At last they were in North Shensi, which was Red territory, and outside the reach of the cultivated General Hu—whom they were never to see. They became creatures of the daylight again, and surveyed this neglected land which the new occupants were in process of restoring. Han explained to them how each unit of the Eight Route Army had been obliged to go to farming and become self-sustaining—since the scattered half-starved peasants had nothing to give them. The visitors were received at an army post, and were fed in a mud hut with a thatched roof—this was a “club house.” They sat outside on a still night, amid a throng of grey-clad soldiers, an

were entertained by Chinese boxing, patriotic speeches, and the singing of the *Guerrilla Marching Song*.

Hitch-hiking on a rice truck, they followed the valley of the Yen River, and so came, weary and sore, to their long-sought goal, the city of Yen-an, three thousand years ancient, according to their guide. The syllable "*an*" means "peace," but it had been a futile hope through all those thirty centuries. On one of the hills stood a tremendously tall pagoda, supposed to exert a spell against invaders; but that hadn't worked against the Mongols and wasn't working now against the Japanese. They had been bombing the city unhindered for a matter of four years and a half, and there were few buildings with walls standing; when you entered these you generally discovered that they had no roofs.

The city lies in a flat plain, not too wide, and the hills rise abruptly; so the citizens had retired to the suburbs and dug themselves caves. The soil is of loess, good and hard, and when you have dug far enough you are safe from bombs of any size; you are cool in summer and warm in winter and dry at all seasons. You and your co-operative friends can cut a street, ascending slowly along a cliff side, and so you can have a whole row of dwellings; or it may be a hospital, a factory, a university for young men, or one for young women. There were thousands of caves—apparently nobody had ever taken a census of them.

Such was Yen-an, and the American visitors fell in love with it at the first contact. Most important of all, it was the cleanest community they had come upon. Perhaps that was because it was new, and perhaps because its citizens were young; the soldiers were young and their commanders not much older; the students were young and their teachers not much older. Everybody was hard at work, everybody was doing something novel and exciting; the place gave you a sense of exhilaration, the like of which Lanny had not encountered since he had gone visiting among the "radicals" in his early days. Those hadn't been able to do anything but dream and talk, whereas these people were constructing, they were making their dreams come true.

Americans were scarce in Red China, and the arrival of this unannounced pair occasioned great interest; everybody wanted to meet them, and to shake hands—they had adopted that western custom, and did it with alarming vigour. The visitors were taken up by Yen-an's best society—which meant precisely everybody in the place. Socialist equality was their bright dream, and everybody felt himself on the same plane, from the poorly dressed ex-peasant, Mao Tse-tung, Party chairman and government head, to the youngest *hsiao-kuei*, which means "little devil," and is the name for the small boys who follow the army and make themselves useful to the soldiers. When civil wars



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have gone on for a generation, there is a plentiful supply of boys who have no homes, and if you feed them they will work and grow up to be soldiers.

The Budds were put up at the Guest House, which meant that they had a private cave. It contained two cots, a small table and two stools made of local wood, a water pitcher, a basin and a *pot de chambre* made of local clay, a couple of blankets and a couple of straw mats—all products of the co-operatives. That was more than most people had and all that anybody needed. The first time Laurel had met Lanny, she had called him a troglodyte, a cave-dweller; now here they were, two of them, and the jokes they made were many.

They and their guide would have their meals in a communal dining-room, and they would eat what everybody else ate—rice, millet, boiled vegetables, and once a week a little meat. The first person they met in the dining-room was a scholarly Englishman who had been teaching at Yenching University in Peiping when he had got news of the attack on Pearl Harbour, and had made a quick dive to the Red guerrillas who were in the near-by mountains. He was in Yen-an for only a short visit, he said: he was going back to the armies to help them with radio, which was his hobby. Next to him sat an American doctor who had been several years in this new world and liked it so well that he had taken a Chinese name; you addressed him as Dr. Ma. He was the happiest American they had met in a long time, having only one serious complaint, that his hospital had no medicines.

## IX

After spending a couple of days on the back of a Chinese pony scrambling up mountainsides and along the edge of precipices and over dubious suspension bridges, a delicately reared lady would have been glad to lie down and rest for a day or two. But everybody wanted to show her things and tell her stories, and this was what she had come for. So she climbed the side of cliffs and inspected the new institutions of a new-old land. The co-operatives were not peculiar to the Red part of Free China; there were several thousand of them, in a score of provinces. They were the answer of the whole land to the move westward and to the desperate needs of war. This population—soldiers, workers, and intellectuals—had never seen western and north-western China before, and had hardly known that it existed. They had come to a raw, almost abandoned land, and had applied to it the techniques of social effort which had been worked out by revolutionary theorists of Europe and America and which had received their first trials on a nation-wide scale in the Soviet Union.

Some of these leaders had studied in Russia, and so their movement called itself Marxist; but Lanny Budd quickly decided that they weren't really Marxist, they were early American Utopian. They were Brook Farm and New Harmony, Ruskin, Tennessee, and Llano, California; they were Robert Owen and Bronson Alcott, Edward Bellamy and J. A. Wayland. Lanny had read about them in the library of his Great-Uncle Eli, and now it was one of the strangest experiences of his life to discover their theories and techniques bursting into flower here on the dust-blown hills under the Great Wall of China.

Here was the communal life; here were the communal kitchens and dining-rooms, the communal nurseries where children were cared for; here were the co-operative production and distribution, the socialized medicine, the socialized teaching. Here was the old idea of students supporting themselves by part-time manual labour; here was a medical college where the students brought spinning wheels out into the open in good weather and spun cloth for three hours every morning. The old New England spinning wheels which had clothed Lanny's forefathers, and which now brought fancy prices from collectors of antiques! Here, too, was the old New England practice of community help in house-raising, corn-husking, and other farm tasks--the name for it here was "labour exchange."

Even more important than all these economic devices was the social spirit. Here were the vision and the dream, the ideal of brotherhood and mutual aid; hope springing eternal in the human breast; faith in the perfectibility of man, in the possibility of building new institutions and having them right this time; the casting off of old habits of greed and self-seeking, the setting up of a new code of group awareness. "Solidarity for ever!" had been the slogan of the "Wobblies"; that of the Chinese co-operatives was: "*Gung ho*!"--meaning work together. The American Dr. Ma was as happy as a schoolboy. "For the first time," he said, "here is a medical world without professional jealousy. Nobody is making money out of the sick; nobody is trying to be richer or more famous than his colleagues; we are all trying to find out the causes of disease and prevent them before they start."

Lanny had visited Leningrad and Odessa, and had seen a bit of this dream in action; but Laurel had only read the books, and had only half believed in the possibility. Naturally a critical nature, prone to see human weaknesses rather than virtues, she was moved by this torrent of faith and enthusiasm. She forgot all about her stiff back and aching thighs, and went from place to place, asking questions for hours. Lanny went along, an amused spectator, and Han blossomed forth as the proud propagandist, scoring the great success of his life--for had he not been the one to discover these wealthy and important Americans

and to bring them safely through many perils? Who says that the collective life will destroy all initiative?

## X

The Japanese planes came now and then, seeking for something they could destroy. They hated this place above all others in China, for it was not only the capital of an enemy country, it was the headquarters of an idea and an ideal more dangerous than any government or any army; something which threatened, not merely the Japanese government and army, but its social system; a challenge to the wealthy clique which owned Japan, and made slaves of the Japanese people as well as of the Chinese. One of the most interesting discoveries the American couple made in Yen-an was the Japanese People's Emancipation League, composed of prisoners of war who had elected to espouse the cause of their captors, to receive the Red education, and to aid the guerrillas in undermining the morale of the Jap Armies. This was the familiar Communist technique; and Laurel said: "Perhaps it is the only way that war will be ended in the world." Her husband replied: "Watch out, and don't be seduced by Red propaganda!"

Yen-an was the centre from which all this propaganda went out to four hundred million Chinese. Yen-an was the capital of the Border Government and the headquarters of its army. Lanny had come to realize what tremendous forces that movement had; not merely the Balu Chün, the regular Eighth Route Army, but the irregulars, the guerrillas, well organized and keeping up incessant resistance in every province of this immense land. The Japs were supposed to have the whole of north-eastern China, but it wasn't so; they had only the ports, the navigable rivers, and the railways, plus as much territory as they could reach by short marches; all the rest was in the hands of the Chinese partisans, who were continually raiding, sabotaging, destroying. The Japs would send punitive expeditions, which would wipe out whole villages; as soon as they left, the peasants would start rebuilding—and meantime the partisans would be raiding at some other spot.

"Where do they get the supplies?" Lanny asked. The answer was that everything came from the enemy; arms, ammunition, food—they even got a tank now and then. The Japs could not guard every place, and the little handful they left behind would be overwhelmed in the night. "Everything they have becomes ours," said one of the generals.

The reason this could go on was that the whole peasant population was with the partisans; for the first time in the history of this land, the people had an army which they regarded as their own. The armies of the war lords had plundered even their own provinces, and had

been hated and feared by their own people; but the Red Army educated as it went. "So it can never be put down," said Mao Tse-tung, its cool-headed political leader, chairman of the Party. "It may be scattered, but it will reassemble. It may be wiped out, but it will spring up again."

## XI

Mao had assented readily to the desire of the two visitors to pay a call upon him. Like everybody else, he and his family lived in caves, but there was a compound in front where his bodyguard stayed—he was a man ardently sought by the enemy and there were many prices upon his head. The interview was at night, and the visitors were driven to the place in a rather rickety truck. The high gate of the compound squeaked on its wooden hinges, and Han, proud and happy, gave the password; they were escorted into the reception room of this cave, which had a red brick floor and whitewashed walls. The room was lighted by only one candle, set in a cup.

When their host rose, they saw that he was a large man, with a full face, thick black hair, and a kindly expression. He wore baggy homespun trousers and jacket, and during the interview he smoked bad home-grown cigarettes. The visitors thought that they had never met a more unassuming person. He did not speak English, and had his own interpreter; he would wait until a question had been translated, and then he would reply, one short sentence at a time, pausing until that had been put into English for the guests. He was a very serious man, and quiet as a Buddha; he had no nervous gestures and his tone was low and mild. Sitting in the shadows, he had the aspect of an oracle.

He explained the revolution to which his Party was dedicated. Three-quarters of the Chinese people were peasants, and they had been in the grip of landlords who took from half to three-quarters of their produce; that was virtual slavery, and the Party was pledged to restore the land to those who worked it. After that had been accomplished, they were a Party of democracy complete and without reservation. Yes, they were willing that the former landlords should have votes, on equal terms with everybody else. "The landlord vote will never carry an election," said Chairman Mao, with a smile.

First of all came the task of driving out the Japanese invader; that was another and even worse kind of landlord, and there would never be any peace in East Asia until the Japanese peasants had abolished landlordism in their country and set up their own people's party. Mao wanted to know how well, if at all, this fact was understood in America; for a while he became the interviewer, and Lanny and Laurel answered questions. Lanny explained that there was the same struggle

going on in America; there were landlords there, too, and they dominated politics and political thinking. "Of course with us land means natural resources, coal and oil and minerals——"

"With us, also," put in the other.

"The Republican Party is the party of those vested interests, including the great industrialists, those who control the corporations which own the land and its natural wealth, the patents, all the secrets and the machinery of production. The Democratic Party is groping its way to a solution of this problem, but it is very far from sharing or even understanding collectivist ideas."

"Does President Roosevelt understand them?"

"He has such an active mind, I should hesitate to say there is any social problem he does not understand—with the help of his wife, perhaps. But he is more or less a prisoner of the politicians from the southern part of our country, which is governed by a land-owning aristocracy very much as you had here in China. That is why his administration will send help to Chiang Kai-shek, but will look upon your movement with suspicion."

"And yet they call themselves Democratic?" inquired the Chinese leader.

"In our country," explained the visitor, "we draw a sharp distinction in the spelling of that word. When it is spelled with a capital letter, it means a group of respectable capitalist-minded politicians. When it is spelled with a small letter, it means something very dangerous, and the large-letter politicians would put it in jail if they could."

Said Mao Tse-tung: "When I was a peasant child and was told that the world was round, I assumed that the people down there must be standing on their heads. And now it seems that perhaps the child was right."

## XII

The thing which interested these visitors most in Yen-an was the educational system, which had made it the cultural centre of the nation. In this poor and backward province of Shensi alone there were now more than a thousand mass-education schools, and in Yen-an were several high schools and universities, besides technical academies, and—of all things in the midst of war—an art school. At all these the Budd couple were honoured guests, and their fame spread from one to another.

The *K'ang Ta* means "University of Resistance," and its students were learning to fight Japanese imperialism while at the same time encouraging the Japanese people against their oppressors. This university had been greatly reduced in size, Lanny was told, because

the Central Chinese Government had made so much trouble for the students trying to get to it. Now there were only two thousand students in Yen-an, while the rest, about ten thousand, had been moved to the "occupied" parts of China; that is to say, to the guerrilla-held "islands" of the north-east. What a topsy-turvy situation, that students preparing to fight a foreign foe would be more afraid of their own government than of the foe!

Most fascinating to Laurel was the Nü Ta, the women's university. This occupied about two hundred caves, extending all the way around two mountains, with a highway serving it, and stairs here and there leading to the valley below. Edgar Snow, who had visited it a couple of years previously, had called it a "College of Amazons." Now it had close to a thousand students, and taught them everything from the care of babies to the complexities of English spelling. All around were terraced fields, and in these the students worked for two hours daily, rising at dawn.

They all wore blue cotton uniforms, straw sandals, and army caps. Lanny saw no rouge or lipstick in Yen-an, and he did not miss it. Many of the women were married, but they were only allowed to be with their husbands on Saturday nights; the other nights they studied. Most of them were daughters of workers or peasants, but there were a few playfully known as "the capitalists." One was pointed out as the daughter of a Shanghai millionaire who had made his fortune out of "Tiger Balm," a patent medicine which was supposed to cure all the ills that Chinese flesh is heir to.

Everything was free at this university except bedding and uniforms. The cost to the government of maintaining it—reckoning in American money—amounted to about forty cents per student per month. Lanny had never seen such serious young folk, and he contrasted them in his mind with American students as he had known them—their minds occupied with football and jazz, petting parties and fraternity politics. His wife suggested: "Perhaps we are going to find that war has made some difference at home."

### XIII

In the shelter of their guest chamber the two troglodytes discussed the sights they had seen and the conclusions to be drawn from them. Was this Communist stage one through which all civilizations had to pass? Or did it apply only to the backward peoples? And, if so, what were the advanced peoples going to make of it, and how were they to get along with it? Lanny said: "Yen-an poses a problem to the capitalist world, and it won't be settled by this war. If the powers permit this to succeed, the news of it will spread to India, to Burma,



Indo-China, Java—all the places where the dark-skinned peoples live in poverty and toil for the benefit of white masters.”

“Are you afraid that I will become a Communist, Lanny?” asked his wife, abruptly.

“Get the facts, and make up your own mind. But I hope you won’t become fanatical, as I fear my sister Bess has.”

“I gather that you haven’t been able to make up your own mind altogether.”

“I am like a man who looks at one side of a coin and then at the other, and they are different, and he can’t decide which is the coin. I see co-operation, and that delights me; then I see repression, and that repels me. Which is the coin?”

“These people don’t seem repressed, dear.”

“I know; but you forget the people who aren’t here, who were killed or driven out. Those we meet are doing what they believe in; but there is no room for any who believe differently and might like to say so.”

“Do we want to go off to some blissful tropic island and live until this class struggle has been fought out?”

“No, but I can’t help wishing that political and economic problems might be settled by free discussion and majority consent. At least I feel bound to advocate that method for my own country, and for all others which have established the democratic process.”

“Of course, but you’re not in any of those countries now: you’re in China, which apparently has been governed by despotic emperors and war lords as far back as anybody’s memory goes. You are going to Russia, where some of the tsars were insane and most of them cruel, so far as I can learn.”

“I know, and I tell myself that I can’t have fixed principles, I have to judge each situation on its own merits or lack of them. I say: ‘I will be a Red for Yenan and a democratic Socialist for the United States.’ But the Communists won’t have it that way, and neither will the Socialists; both sides have come to hate the other worse than they hate the capitalists. I have known Socialists so exasperated by Communist dogmatism and arrogance that they have been driven completely into reaction; they still think they are Socialists, but they never say anything about how to get Socialism, they spend all their time denouncing the Reds.”

“The longer I watch things, the more I realize that the world is in a mess,” said the wise lady whom this philosopher had chosen for his wife. “Let us make up our minds that we are going to try to understand all sides, and not expect to find it easy.”

“This war is going to be hard,” replied the husband; “and unless I am mistaken the peace will be harder. World capitalism is going to

be even less willing to let the Chinese people go Red than they were to let the Russians go Red after the last war. The whole British Empire will be at stake, and the Dutch, the French, the Belgians—whatever else there is. If the flames of revolt are not extinguished they will spread to the Arabs, and to Africa, North and South."

"Haven't we shown how to help a backward people in the Philippines, Lanny?"

"Yes, and I think that would be the answer; but can we get the other great powers to learn from us? And will our own capitalists let us teach them? Won't we be sending American money and arms to help Chungking put down Yen-an, and to help the British and the Dutch to maintain their empires?"

"Let's win this war first, Lanny!" said the wife.

## 27

### *The Desert Shall Rejoice*

#### I

THE time had come for Mr. and Mrs. Budd to be moving on. The diet deficiency was beginning to affect the health of both of them; Laurel's cheeks were pale and she was losing weight. It was a tuberculosis diet, and few white people could live on it; many of the Chinese suffered from the disease. Lanny recalled the case of Thoreau, who had preserved his independence at the expense of his nutrition and had paid this same penalty. There was no sense in paying it unless you had to.

One of Lanny's first moves upon arriving in Yen-an had been to make the acquaintance of two wide-awake Russians who represented Tass, the news agency of the Soviet Union. They received news from their homeland by wireless and transmitted it to the newspapers of China by the national mail system, which was still working in spite of war. Lanny guessed that the pair would be in contact with the Soviet authorities by way of Ulan-Bator, capital of Outer Mongolia.

He explained to them that he was the nephew of Jesse Blackless, Communist deputy in the parliament of the recently deceased French Republic, and now serving as adviser on French affairs to Narkomindel, the Soviet Foreign Office, located in Kuibyshev, to which the government had moved. Also he was brother-in-law to Hans Robin, the violinist, and half-brother to Bessie Budd Robin, his accompanist,

both of whom enjoyed the status of "honoured artists of the Soviet Union," and had gone to Moscow after the attack by the Hitlerite bandits, in order to express sympathy for the Soviet people and give them what encouragement they could. All three of these persons had urged Lanny to come to the Soviet Union, and Jesse Blackless had said that he could obtain the necessary permission. It was for this reason that Mr. and Mrs. Budd had taken the long journey from Hong-Kong to Yen-an. Lanny further explained that his father was the President of Budd-Erling Aircraft, whose planes would soon be going to Russia under lend-lease—if they were not already there.

What he desired was to inform Jesse Blackless that his nephew was in Chungking and desired to enter the Soviet Union. The agents informed him that they had no sending apparatus. They took him to the head of the New China Agency, the Communist news network, who agreed to put a news item on the air, with the reasonable chance that the Moscow monitors would pick up the broadcast. Certainly it was news that the son of Budd-Erling Aircraft had escaped from the Japanese at Hong-Kong, and had travelled all the way across China and was now in Yen-an. His wife, the New York writer who used the pen name of Mary Morrow in the *Bluebook* magazine, was also news; and likewise the fact that they desired to visit Mr. Budd's uncle. It was to be expected that the Moscow monitoring station would take the trouble to inform the uncle of the recording of such a broadcast.

## II

Lanny knew that bureaucratic wheels grind slowly in all lands, so he didn't expect an answer for some time. He was agreeably surprised when three days later one of the Tass men handed him a message: "Congratulations will endeavour to arrange transit visas will report Jesse Blackless." Then, for a couple of weeks, silence. Lanny had about made up his mind to approach the Yen-an authorities and ask them to intervene, when at last came the decision: "Invitation extended come Ulan-Bator transportation from there will be provided Jesse Blackless."

The Red uncle may not have realized what a task he was setting the newlyweds by his three words of instructions: "Come Ulan-Bator." This capital of Outer Mongolia lay a thousand miles to the north. First you had to cross the Great Wall, and then you had to cross the Gobi desert, from which came the dust storms that drove everybody in Yen-an into hiding in their caves. With every step of the journey you would be moving into greater cold, until, when you finished, you would be almost in Siberia. It was now the end of February, but spring

comes late in that region, and to make such a journey would require an expedition.

Their only chance would be to fly; and this Lanny discussed with the Yen-an authorities. They had a crude airfield here, but only one small plane that had not been smashed by the Japs—and that one was not in order. Chungking had planes, and sometimes brought in supplies under the exchange arrangement, but they wouldn't have any dealings with private parties. There were several commercial airlines within Central Government territory, but they were never permitted to cross the border into Red territory. Lanny visited the airport, and with Han's help questioned those in charge, but nobody knew of any plane that was for hire, or of any way to fly to the capital of Outer Mongolia.

The couple might, of course, go out by way of Chungking; Lanny might send a wireless message to the American Embassy, appealing for help, and doubtless the embassy would arrange for the pair to be brought out on the return trip of some government plane. But then they would miss Russia, and it would be an admission of defeat. The Chungking officials would scold them, and would confiscate all Laurel's notes about Yen-an, and probably those about the rest of China, on the ground that she had shown herself a hostile person, and had broken Chungking's stringent regulations.

Lanny began inquiring about camels, and supplies needed for a crossing of the Gobi. Laurel still had most of the gold sovereigns sewed up in her belt; but how could one get in touch with the Mongolians, to hire a camel train, and to find out if their government would permit an expedition to pass through? And what were the chances of the Japs raiding across any part of the route? How far could they be helped by the Yen-an government? And so on.

At this point there came, quite literally, a windfall; at any rate an airfall. One of Laurel's student friends told her that a strange plane had arrived on the previous evening, and Lanny hurried to the airport to find out about it. Sure enough, there was a two-engine plane, apparently a small transport; he couldn't be sure, because soldiers were guarding it and wouldn't let anybody near. Lanny tried to question one of the airport men who knew a little English, but the man wouldn't talk. All very hush-hush, and Lanny wondered, could it be an enemy plane which had got lost and run out of petrol?

He got the story by appealing to one of the military officers whom he had met on the evening of his speech about the T.V.A. The plane was flown by a Frenchman who claimed to have saved it from capture in a raid of the Japs in Hopeh Province. According to the man's story, he had been flying for a commercial concern, and they had stored the plane until the time when business might be resumed. Hearing tha

enemy raiders were approaching the place, the Frenchman had thrown some extra tins of fuel into the plane and taken off in a hurry. He had tried to land at a field in Central Government territory, but had been fired upon, and so he had decided to try Yen-an. The authorities here were dubious about him, suspected him as a spy or saboteur, and had locked him up for the present.

Lanny got permission to interview the man, and found him a typical product of the Paris boulevards; cynical, clever, aware of all the worst facts of the world. Jean Fouché was his name, and he was, of course, delighted to meet someone who knew his *argot* and could talk about old times. Lanny made sure that he really was what he claimed to be, a man without the slightest interest in Chinese politics, who had flown all over the country for high pay and with no thought but to get back to Paris with the money in his pockets. He took Lanny for the art expert and rich man's son, and asked what he thought these Red *salauds* would do to him, and would they confiscate the plane? Before the talk was over he suggested, with a sly wink: "Wouldn't you like to buy it, Mr. Budd?"

Lanny's answer must have surprised him. "If I bought it, would you be able to fly me to Ulan-Bator?"

### III

Lanny took the problem direct to Mao Tse-tung, who denied that he was a dictator, but who might have something to say about it all the same. The American explained that he had no idea what would be the attitude of the Border Government to a refugee plane, whether they would confiscate it or buy it; all he wanted out of it was a trip across the Gobi desert. He wanted to get to Moscow without having to ask favours of Chungking, and without risk of having his wife's precious notes confiscated. If she reached New York with those notes intact she could write articles whose propaganda value to Yen-an would exceed the price of many planes. Lanny Budd, old-time Pink, knew how to put matters to the Party chairman of a People's government. He added that he had such sympathy with that government that he would expect to pay a generous fee for the service.

The People's Council, or the General Staff, or whoever it was that decided such matters, took two days to debate the project. Then a polite young official—how polite they all were, and how young!—announced the news to Mr. Lanny Budd. The People's government would be pleased to transport him and his wife to Ulan-Bator for the actual cost of the petrol, which was unfortunately very high; they estimated it at eight thousand Chinese dollars, which was four hundred

American dollars. The young official named the sum deprecatingly, as if he would be ready to cut it in half if Mr. Lanny Budd had shown any sign of displeasure; but Lanny answered promptly that the sum appeared most reasonable and he would be happy to pay it in gold. He was asked when he would like to make the trip, and replied that he and his wife would be ready at five minutes' notice. He was told that the decision would depend upon weather conditions; also, that the Ulan-Bator airport would be notified by wireless of the proposed flight.

"The pilot and the co-pilot will be our own," remarked the official, significantly; and this Lanny had expected. They wouldn't take any chance that M. Fouché might like Ulan-Bator and decide to remain. Lanny ventured to ask what was going to happen to the man, and the reply was that he had already been released and provided with useful work—but of a sort that wouldn't take him anywhere near the airport! Lanny didn't ask if the man was to be paid for the plane; an old-time Pink knew the Communist formula, "the socialization of the instruments and means of production and distribution"—and assuredly a transport plane was covered by the last word of that formula. The Yenan theoreticians had recently decided that they were fostering private enterprise in order to destroy feudalism, their first and most real enemy; but they would probably not feel bound to apply that new directive to an aeroplane of dubious origin.

#### IV

The travellers packed their few belongings—less what they gave to their friends. They had a sad time saying good-bye; the faithful Han wept, and said that the light of his life was going out. Lanny gave him the Newcastle address and told him to write when circumstances permitted. Their friends all promised to write—there would be peace again some day, and Free China would build a new world, so wonderful that everybody in America would want to fly to see it!

A cart took them to the field before dawn, and with their sheepskin coats on and their blankets wrapped about their legs they settled themselves for a long flight. Their baggage included two bottles of water and a lunch consisting of boiled rice, slices of spiced mutton, and two large pickled cucumbers. As soon as there was light enough to see by, the plane took off, and they soared past the tall pagoda which was supposed to keep off enemies. Soon after the sun was up they were above the Great Wall, which they had heard about since childhood but never expected to see. It was wide enough for several horsemen to ride on abreast; from the air it looked like the parallel cables of a

suspension bridge, hung from tower to tower over the unending hills of North China. They had been told that there were fourteen hundred miles of it; undoubtedly it was one of the mightiest works of man—but it hadn't succeeded in keeping the Mongols out of this country.

On the other side was Inner Mongolia, now partly in Jap hands; but they saw no enemy, and the vast sky was empty. They passed over the Yellow River, the Hwang-ho, which makes a great double bend here. Now and then they passed over villages and saw peasants working, but the peasants seldom looked up. The Chinese were moving into this country, driven westward by the Japs, and the Mongols were moving out before the Chinese. The spade was mightier than the thundering herd.

This plane had not been built for anybody's comfort, but to carry freight. It had no heating arrangements, and no fuel to waste. Its walls transmitted every sound, and the roar of well-worn engines made it necessary to shout if you wanted to be heard. Extra tins of petrol were lashed fast to the floor, and the rest of the space was at the disposal of the passengers; they could stand and look out of the windows, first one side and then the other, pointing out anything of interest. They were over Outer Mongolia now, the great Gobi desert; bare wastes of wind-driven sand, sometimes piled into hills with rocks sticking through.

Somewhere in these immense spaces the Andrews expedition had discovered the dinosaur eggs, perhaps the most sensational event in the history of archæology, or geology, or whatever science it is which deals with ancient eggs. That had been while Lanny was making love to Marie de Bruyne on the Coast of Pleasure; and now, even if the spot had been marked, he couldn't have seen very much from the height of a quarter of a mile. There is nothing more monotonous than looking down upon a desert, unless it is looking down upon an empty ocean. The map showed a caravan route through the Gobi, but they saw no trace of it, and no signs of life; they soon got tired of standing on their feet, and lay down and wrapped themselves in blankets against the cold.

Lanny thought, and his thoughts were not entirely pleasant. This was a two-seater plane, and on all such planes the practice was that while the pilot drove, the co-pilot took the altitude of the sun, and figured the wind drift and other factors which made up what the Pan-Am people called the "Howgozit." But up in front there sat two Chinese who looked like schoolboys, and had neither instruments nor charts. What were they doing? Just guessing? Or did they know this desert so well that they could distinguish one chain of sand-hills from another? The pilot hadn't claimed any such knowledge; he had just said, with a cheerful grin: "I take you!"

Ulan-Bator couldn't be such a great city that you could see it from a considerable distance. And suppose you missed it, and started circling around looking for it? There would be a margin of daylight, for the trip was estimated to take only six or eight hours, depending upon the wind. But would there be a margin of petrol? And suppose you had to come down in this desolate and terrifying waste? There were places that looked level, but how could you be sure what ridges might show up in the sand when you got near? And if you landed on such ground could you ever take off again? What would happen to you, with only a limited supply of food and water? Could you stand the cold of one of these desert nights? If one of the deadly sandstorms hit you, the plane might be buried and you would almost certainly be lost. They were not hot winds, such as blew from the Sahara and sometimes made life miserable in Southern France and Spain; they were winds that came from Siberia and the Arctic. Lanny suddenly decided that he had been taking too many chances with his valuable bride.

## V

She was lying on her back, the most comfortable position on a hard floor. She was wrapped in a blanket, and the cold of mid-morning was not too great. Her duffelbag, partly emptied, was serving as a pillow, and her eyes were closed; he thought she was asleep, and he sat for some time watching her with loving thoughts. There was reason to believe that the great miracle of Nature had taken place within her body, and Lanny thought about that, always with awe. It wouldn't be his first experience of the emotions of fatherhood; his thoughts wandered away to the other side of the world, where his first child would soon be celebrating her twelfth birthday. He had sent her a cablegram from Manila, and Robbie was supposed to have let her know the news from Hengyang.

He looked at his wife again, and saw that her lips were moving. He thought she was talking in her sleep, and laid his ear close to her lips, with the idea that she would be amused to know what she had been saying. Her tone was always gentle, not meant to compete with twin motors of a transport plane. But he could hear her voice, and somehow it sounded different. He leaned still closer, and made out the words. This is what he heard:

"I am not really malicious, and I wish you to be happy. I was not meant for him. I didn't know enough, and I suppose I was too eager. Men don't like that. Mother warned me, but I wouldn't listen. Anyhow, it doesn't matter now. Take good care of him, Laurel, he is really a kind man. He thinks too well of himself, but you can remedy that a little, perhaps."



after noon the pilot turned and shouted, and they leaped up and ran to the front. "Ulan-Bator!" Sure enough; through the clear air over the snowbound landscape they could see far-distant buildings. The passengers stood watching the welcome sight draw steadily closer. It was much more of a city than they had expected; they had looked for a scattering of conical Mongol tents called *yurts*, and there were these in great numbers, but also modern buildings, including a theatre capable of seating several thousand persons. The Soviets had been here—and wherever they came you would find means of entertaining and instructing the masses.

There was a large airport, with planes in revetments. The arrival circled once, so as to give those in control an opportunity to observe the plane through glasses and make sure it was the one which had been scheduled. A year or so ago there had been a treaty between Russia and Japan, by which it was agreed that Outer Mongolia was in the Soviet sphere; but doubtless the authorities wouldn't take chances, and the pilot apparently didn't want to take any either. They circled, and wagged their wings in friendly fashion.

They came down to a three-point landing, skidded slightly in the snow, and then came to rest. Men came running, some of them soldiers. They saw the door open and two travel-worn tourists appear in the entrance, raising their clenched right fists and announcing: "*Amerikansky tovarische!*" When the questioning began they shook their heads vigorously, exclaiming: "*Nyet, nyet Russky!*" That probably wasn't right, but it was what Lanny recalled from visits, one a decade ago and the other two decades ago.

A gangway was brought for them to descend on, and presently an official came who spoke a little English. Lanny produced his credentials, in the form of the telegram from Kuibyshev instructing him to come here. The official knew nothing about it, but since they were Americans it was doubtless all right. Americans were a privileged people, likely to drop down out of any sky; and now they were allies in the war on the Hitlerite bandits. "*Amerikansky tovarische*" would get them anything they wanted in the People's Revolutionary Republic of Outer Mongolia.

Lanny put presents into the young pilots' hands and thanked them in the name of the people's cause. Farewells were said, and then the travellers were put into a much-worn car and driven to a government office where they told their story. No instructions had come, but they wrote a telegram to Uncle Jesse, and doubtless others were sent by the officials. Meantime the Americans were put up in a reasonably clean hotel room, and made the discovery which has become legendary among Americans travelling in Sovietland—the plumbing didn't work. Lanny said it wouldn't matter so much with Mongolians, for he had

been told that they were the least-washed people in the world; water was applied to them only twice in a lifetime, first when they were born and second when they got married.

Naturally the couple wanted to see all they could of this unexpected new city of Central Asia. Ulan-Bator Khoto means "Red Knight City"; before that it had been Urga, the palace, the holy place, residence of the Living Buddha. When the last one had died, the Soviets had not permitted the customary reincarnation to occur, and the former residence had become a museum. The desire of the *Amerikansky* to view it was appreciated. They would have a "guide," who would also be a police guard, but that wouldn't trouble them, since they had nothing to hide. He was a yellow man, but politically Red, and knew a few words of what he thought was English and used over and over.

Later, when the authorities got word from Kuibyshev, they realized that they had important visitors and supplied them with an "intellectual," a young woman of Mongolian race who had studied English in Moscow and now served as translator in one of the offices of what she insisted was the entirely autonomous People's government. She wanted to show them every modern improvement in the community, including the university, the veterinary college, the medical college, and the wonderful theatre with the revolving stage; she appeared chagrined when they told her that they had seen such things in America, and that after the museum they most desired to visit a real *yurt* and see how the primitive Mongols lived. Milk and curds were their food, together with blood which they drew from the legs of living cattle and horses and drank while it was warm. They bundled up their babies, all but a small opening at each end, and never unbundled them except as they grew and needed a larger chrysalis.

She took her charges out into the desert and showed them not merely a group of *yurts*, but also a high school, including a snow-covered spot which she said had been a truck garden, and would be again. "They even had flowers," she remarked proudly; and Lanny quoted to her: "The desert shall rejoice, and blossom like the rose." She thought that was lovely, and asked who had said it. When he told her Isaiah, she looked blank and asked: "Who is he?" When the visitor replied: "He is one of the prophets in the Jewish Old Testament," she was disconcerted. He told her: "You ought to look into them; you'd be surprised to see what good comrades they were!"

## VII

Instructions came: the travellers were to be flown to Ulan-Ude, a station on the Trans-Siberian railway, where they would be picked up

by a west-bound passenger plane. They were back in civilization; there was a regular airline between the two Ulan—Mongolian for Reds. The plane would be heated, so they would no longer have to wonder if they were going to freeze to death in a storm. If you think you don't like civilization, just get out of its reach for a few weeks !

In Ulan-Ude they had to wait, and nobody could say for how long. The Soviet Union at war could not spare a plane to transport private passengers a distance of four thousand miles, and there were no commercial planes anywhere within its borders. Here everything was concentrated upon the one task of repelling the Hitlerite invader. (That was the name they gave him, the worst name they could think of; as a rule they reserved the name "German" for the "people," with whom they insisted they had no quarrel.)

Machinery had been brought here from the western front; brick factory buildings were arising, and soon products would be pouring forth. What the products would be nobody told the travellers, and it was not good form to ask. They were guests of the local soviet, and were taken about and shown all the modern improvements. Lanny found a bookstore and obtained a pocket dictionary, and they diligently studied the more important words—those which had to do with something to eat.

During this period of leisure Lanny told his wife the words she had spoken while over the Gobi desert. She was deeply shocked, and tears ran down her cheeks. "Oh, Lanny, those poor people ! How perfectly dreadful !"

"Don't forget, dear, it may not be true. It may have been just a bad dream."

"I believe it is true," she declared. "I don't have any idea how it happens, but I have become convinced that my mind gets things. And that sounds so like Lizbeth. Poor child !"

She made Lanny repeat every word that he remembered; and then, of course, she wanted to try another séance. They did so; but the effort produced only Otto Kahn and his playful courtesies—he said he didn't have the pleasure of the young lady's acquaintance, and in the spirit world no gentleman would speak to a lady without a proper introduction. Laurel tried half a dozen times, but her husband never again heard the gentle voice of the girl from the Green Spring Valley.

## VIII

There came a west-bound transport plane with two vacant seats, and at a half-hour's notice the passengers were hustled on board. Now they had comfortable seats, and presently were flying over the wide Lake

Baikal—only they couldn't see it, because all the curtains were drawn. That was the case whenever they were passing over military secrets. Lanny guessed that it might be the new railway which had been built around the foot of the lake; in the old days there had been a great ferry, and passenger and freight cars had had to be shuttled across. They could talk now, because this was a passenger plane, with sound-absorbing walls; their seats were side by side, and they did not get acquainted with the other passengers, most of whom were in uniform. One was a prisoner, handcuffed to his guard. They did not ask what he had done.

All day they were privileged to look at the snowbound wastes of Siberia, with a few towns, all with factory chimneys smoking. At nightfall they came to Irkutsk, but didn't see anything of it, because the curtains again were drawn. At the airport they had only time for a meal, and to stretch their legs, and then they were off for the long night journey. They had to sleep sitting up, but that was a small matter after the discomforts they had been experiencing. Lanny, the much-travelled, remarked: "If you want to appreciate an aeroplane, travel across all China before you get on board!"

The journey took the rest of the next day. They had no map, and weren't even told the names of the places at which they stopped. They were like a consignment of freight, tagged for Kuibyshev, for reasons not known to those who handled the shipment. They were glad to be warm, and to be able to get wholewheat bread and cabbage soup (with small pieces of meat) at the stopping places. They were grateful for the Russian custom of tea-drinking, which provided a huge samovar full of boiling water at all stations.

Their only fears were that they might be put off in favour of more important passengers, or that the Arctic might send a snowstorm and force them down. But the all-powerful Soviet government had weather stations all along their northern coast, and even in the ice-bound islands beyond; and apparently somebody in authority at Kuibyshev wanted to talk to the son of Budd-Erling. The bridal pair stayed on the plane, and the plane stayed on its course, and on the evening of the second day it settled down on a runway well spread with ashes, and they were told one word which they could understand. It was the name of a wheat and cattle town on the middle Volga which had once been Samara, and had been changed in honour of a prominent Soviet commissar named Kuibyshev.

There in the airport was the shrunken and wrinkled old gentleman who had once been an American painter on the French Riviera, and later a *député de la république française*. He was wrapped in a shaggy bearskin coat and had a hat to match—for you can't go about with your old bald head entirely bare when the temperature is far below

zero. He had just had an attack of influenza, he told them—but he was determined to stick it out and live to attend the funeral of Adolf Hitler. He must have been homesick, for when he set eyes on his nephew he gave him a Russian bear's hug and kissed him on both whiskery cheeks. Lanny hadn't had a chance to shave, and looked like a Mongolian herdsman who had been married for several months.

But Laurel was Laurel, and had managed to get her hair in order on board the plane. Uncle Jesse took her two hands in his and looked her over carefully. "My new niece!" he said. "You look all right, but you are undernourished."

"We have been living on rice," remarked Lanny. "It will be up to you to feed her."

"I'll do my best," replied the old man. Then, still giving his attention to the lady from Baltimore: "You are a clever little minx, and you have a sharp tongue. I should hate to be your enemy."

"Quite true," said the niece, amused. "But how do you know it? Are you psychic?"

"I leave all that rubbish to Lanny. I have read your stories."

"You found them in Russia?"

"No, hardly. But this government doesn't make any mistake about the people it lets into the country. The clippings were ordered by cable and came by air in a diplomatic pouch. I was told about them, and asked for the privilege of reading them. You have already made several friends among our literati."

"Certainly that is a pleasant way to greet an author, Uncle Jesse, and I appreciate it."

"The *Herrenvolk* has already been translated, and will be published on the back page of *Pravda* if you give your consent."

Laurel was so pleased she couldn't keep the tears out of her eyes. "Of course I give it," she said. "And I give my heart to the Soviet people at war!"

## IX

Jesse had got them a room, the most priceless of all possessions in this river town which had once been a wheat-shipping centre and now suddenly had become a world capital. "One of your admirers is sleeping on my sofa," he told the wife, with a chuckle.

They got some food in the airport restaurant, and then somebody's car took the author of "The *Herrenvolk*," together with her duffelbag and husband, through the snow-paved streets of Kuibyshev. Lanny perceived that he was going to be a mere appendage so long as he stayed in the Soviet Union, and perhaps elsewhere; that pleased him, for he was proud of his new treasure, and pleased to have his literary

judgment confirmed. Only one thought troubled him, again and again; he couldn't get over his habit of trying to keep his secret from the Gestapo, and now he would find himself whispering to himself: "Good Lord, what will the Führer and the Reichsmarschall make of this! What will Kurt Meissner make of it!" They had seemed so far away, but now they were near again—and they were sure to have spies in this town.

Everybody wanted to know about Yen-an: the number of its caves and their size; the progress of its schools and the number of the pupils; the state of its morale, the size of its armies, and every word they could remember that Mao Tse-tung had spoken. Laurel had notes? Oh, wonderful! Would she produce them and read from them? And would she permit the leading Soviet journalist, Ilya Ehrenburg, to prepare an interview with her? The story would go to America, and would greatly increase the price which a woman explorer could demand for her work in New York. She couldn't say No, if only out of gratitude for a warm room to sleep in and nourishing food to eat. More and more clearly her husband saw that a presidential agent's goose was cooked—and might as well be eaten hot!

With the help of his uncle whom the censors knew, Lanny sent off two cablegrams: one to his father, reading: "Arrived safely from Hong-Kong via Yen-an with wife Laurel Creston Reverdy's niece stop what news concerning Oriole sailed from Hong-Kong December eight love to all reply Continental Hotel Kuibyshev Lanny Budd." The other was to Charles T. Alston at his Washington hotel: "Escaped Hong-Kong travelled via Yen-an wire instructions stop if wanted Washington please facilitate travel self and wife married writer Laurel Creston fellow-passenger yacht Oriole stop yacht left Hong-Kong December eight kindly mention news if available regards reply Continental Hotel Kuibyshev Lanny Budd."

After that a distinguished author's husband had nothing to do but wander about and look at the temporary capital of the Soviet Union at war, and accept the hospitality of all who wanted to invite them. For years Lanny Budd had been known in New York and London as Mister Irma Barnes, and now he was Mister Mary Morrow and didn't mind it a bit. They went about in their stained and battered sheepskin costumes, and it was perfectly all right, because everybody knew they couldn't have got new clothes if they had tried. And anyhow, the costumes were like military service stripes. On the streets people would look and then say: "Those must be the *Amerikansky* who have travelled through China! Wonderful people, the *Amerikansky*! How soon will they send us help?"

Lanny had read many times that the Russian people were not permitted to talk with foreigners, or that they were afraid to, and seldom

invited them to their homes. He and Laurel did not find it so, but they realized that perhaps they were a special case; the fact that they had come from Yenan, and the fact that Lanny was a nephew of Jesse Blackless and Laurel an anti-Nazi writer—these facts put them in a different class from persons in the pay of capitalist newspapers who came and pretended to like the Russians, accepted their hospitality, and then went away and wrote things about them which they considered insulting and often downright inventions.

The American couple walked the wide streets of this river port, which in many ways made Lanny think of the frontier towns of the American West. The snow was piled in ridges, there being neither time nor labour to remove it. The shops had nothing on display, and there were long queues waiting wherever there was a chance of anything inside. The people were poorly clad, and you saw signs of undernourishment, but nothing compared to conditions among the Chinese; what was available was fairly distributed and there was no black market. The people were quiet, sober, and friendly; they seldom smiled, but on the other hand they showed no traces of anxiety. To be sure, the front was some eight hundred miles away, and no bombs had been dropped here, but everybody got the war news, from the papers or from radios in the factories and offices; they knew that their own winter offensive had been stopped by the Germans, and that another great Panzer drive was coming as surely as springtime.

## X

Yes, the inhabitants of Kuibyshev, and of Saratov and Stalingrad and the other towns of the Volga, had reasons enough to be afraid, and to worry if they had been so disposed. But they had been born in an age of war and revolution, and excepting the old ones, they had never known a time when their country wasn't under siege. Sometimes it had been only an ideological, a propaganda siege—but that had been preliminary to political and military attack, and the Soviets had always known it. World capitalism had fought them from the hour of their birth, and with every weapon in its arsenal. Laurel was too young to remember these events, but Lanny had been part of them in his heart and mind, and even to some extent in reality.

He told her how, because of his knowledge of French, he had become secretary-translator to Professor Alston at the Peace Conference; how he had met Lincoln Steffens, who had been sent by President Wilson to Russia and had come home to report: "I have seen the future and it works." Lanny and Steffens together had taken Colonel House to meet Jesse Blackless in his attic studio in Montmartre, and

there they had met three representatives of the new-born revolutionary government. It was there that the Prinkipo Conference was planned; and while it never came off, it served the purpose of teaching Lanny Budd how world capitalism worked, and how deadly it was to the cause of the dispossessed all over the earth. So now he was able to understand every pulse-beat of that distrust which filled the souls of Soviet people, and caused them to look upon every stranger as a possible spy and future betrayer.

"The madness of Adolf Hitler has made us allies for the moment," he told her, "but the Russians find it hard to realize that this is so, and they cannot be persuaded that it will last. When this war is over, America will still be a capitalist nation, the most powerful in the world. Its wealthy class will inevitably be the enemy of every Communist nation—not because it wants to be, but because of the economic forces which drive it."

"Don't forget that I have read a volume of Lenin," remarked Laurel, with a smile. "The theory of economic determinism is not strange to me."

"You will meet my father, and you will like him, because he is a kind and generous person; but if you talk to him about this situation you will find that he is economically determined, and he will tell you exactly why and how. He has a lot of men on his payroll—maybe ten thousand by now—and when the war is over he will have the devil's own time trying to meet that payroll. In order to do it he will have to sell goods abroad, and he will come into conflict with states which maintain government monopolies in foreign trade. He will consider that unfair competition and a deadly menace to his 'free enterprise system.'"

"Will he be willing to go to war to end it?"

"Social forces do not operate with clear-cut programmes. 'Issues' will arise, one after another, and Robbie will always be sure that he is right. He will hire propagandists to defend his cause, and he will believe his own propaganda. Some day there will be an issue which he will call one of 'principle,' and which therefore cannot be compromised. Fighting will start over some border, and Robbie will be absolutely certain that the Communists have started it; he will also be certain that anybody who opposes him is a hireling in the service of the Reds."

"A pretty bleak prospect you are holding out for your unborn child, Lanny!"

"I don't pretend to know what is coming, dear. It is what H. G. Wells has called 'a race between education and catastrophe.' If the American people can be brought to understand the nature of exploitation and the competitive wage system, they may put their economy on



a basis where they can live without paying tribute to Robbie, and without lending money to foreigners to enable them to buy our goods. But I don't know who's going to win that race."

## XI

There came a cablegram from the afore-mentioned capitalist exploiter. Lanny had expected to hear from him first, because he was a prompt and business-like person, and he didn't have to consult anybody else, as would be the case with Alston. The message said: "Congratulations and best love from all to you both stop please advise concerning your plans stop do you need money stop no news whatever from yacht *Oriole* stop family greatly distressed wire any information Robert Budd."

When Laurel read that message she broke down and wept, the first time Lanny had seen her do that. It was dreadful news, and he couldn't think of any word to comfort her. More than three months had passed since the *Oriole* had sailed, and in that time she would surely have reached some harbour and reported. Of course there was a chance that she might have been wrecked, and that those on board were hiding from the Japs, or perhaps trying to make their way to civilization. But Laurel took her psychic message as settling the matter. "Something tells me it is true."

Lanny could only remind her that since this war had started many tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, had gone out to sea and never come back. That would go on—who could guess how many years more? But none of those persons happened to be known to Laurel Creston, and she had not entered into their lives and the secrets of their hearts as she had done with her uncle and her cousin. "They had their weaknesses, but they were kind people, Lanny."

"I know," he said. "But Reverdy had no great desire to live, and it didn't seem to me that Lizbeth was headed for a happy life. Anyhow, you can take this comfort—if your message is true, they aren't suffering now. That is the one answer to grief." He put his arms about her and held her tightly. "Life is for the living, dear. We have our work to do, and perhaps we may be able to leave the world a tiny bit better than we found it. We cannot end death, but we may help to stop wholesale murder."

He knew that by her uncle's death she had come into possession of a considerable amount of money. He didn't know how large the Holdenhurst fortune was, but he knew what share of it Laurel would possess, because he had inspected the list of persons who received a share of Reverdy's Budd-Erling investments, under the strange tax-

dodging scheme he had devised. Lanny wouldn't mention this until some time later. Now he was the lover trying to share her sorrow, and to diminish it by transferring her thoughts to himself. He was not unacquainted with that most futile of human emotions called grief; he had wept for Rick when he had thought Rick was dead, and for Marcel Detaze, and then for Marie de Bruyne, and for Freddy Robin, and for Trudi. Worst of all had been those last two cases, where he had known that the persons were undergoing torture and that their deaths were to be desired. Laurel should hope that her psychic message was veridical, and that nobody on the *Oriole* was in the hands of the Japs.

## XII

Experienced in love as well as in sorrow, Lanny told his wife that he needed her, and that she had given him the most complete happiness he had ever known. She answered that he had loved so many women, and could she take the place of them all? He put in his plea that five women in a matter of twenty-six years wasn't such a bad record—considering that it had been made on the Coast of Pleasure, and in the smart society of Paris and London and Berlin and New York. In those places the record might pass as equivalent to a celibate life.

"Never forget, darling," he told her, "two of those women died, and the other three left me, so I haven't been exactly a Don Juan. Only one of the five—that was Trudi—understood and sympathized with my ideas; and she didn't know my world, and would never have been able to help me as you can. She knew that, and it troubled all her thoughts of me."

"Didn't Marie understand your ideas?"

"Marie was a conventional lady of the French provinces, Catholic and conservative. She loved me, but she was always afraid of our love and looked upon it as sin. Also, she was shocked beyond words when I caused us to be put out of Italy by trying to help Matteotti; she broke with me, and wouldn't see me for months afterwards."

He told these old stories, as a way to divert her mind. He told her that from this time on there would be only one woman in the world for him; if he ever looked at any other, it would be as a subject for her fiction, and he would report it to her promptly. He knew that this would have to be true if she was ever to enjoy peace, for that had been her upbringing. He was tireless in telling her so, and trying to wipe out his European past. He assured her that he meant every word of the Episcopalian formula he had recited: "to love and to cherish, till death us do part." They had already had some trials together; he hoped he had stood them acceptably, and he was certain that she had.

Now they had work to do; they couldn't stay indefinitely in Soviet Russia, and must make the most of their days. So the lady from Baltimore dried her eyes and wiped the shine off her nose—here, as in Yen'an, there was neither powder nor rouge to be had.

Such are the quirks of human nature—Lanny would catch himself thinking about Lizbeth and her father and the other people on the *Oriole*, and doing just what he had forbidden his wife to do. He had been more fond of Lizbeth than he had been willing to admit, even to himself. He had been, say one-quarter in love with her; he had thought of her intimately, and studied her closely. She had done her best according to her lights; certainly she had never knowingly done harm to anybody. And what a horrid ending to a young life, so full of hope and expectation! What a blindly cruel thing Nature could be—and men, who were Nature's product. How difficult to imagine reason or purpose in what they did!

And then Reverdy: he had been Lanny's friend, as much as he could be any man's friend. His wilfulness had been a reaction against his own weakness, his inadequacy to the tasks the world had set him. He had been determined to assert himself, to prove himself to others and to himself. He had tried so hard to take care of his precious person, and of his precious fortune—and how inadequate his judgment had been to that task! Looking back, Lanny could see it; but who is there, looking back, that cannot see blunders—whole storerooms full of them—memory storerooms!

And all those other people on the yacht; the three women guests, the officers and the crew—persons with whom Lanny had lived in daily contact for more than a month, and whose lives had been entrusted to Reverdy's fallible judgment! What had their thoughts been, and their feelings, when the shell had struck—assuming that there had been a shell—and when they had found themselves thrown into the dark engulfing water? Lanny could form an idea, all too vivid, having been in the same plight so recently. It was something he hadn't told Laurel in detail; but he could never get the memories out of his own mind, and the world would never seem to him quite the same bright and cheerful place.

## 28

*Fifty-Year Plan*

## I

THE second cablegram arrived a couple of days later. "Lanning Prescott Budd Continental Hotel Kuibyshev retel delighted important service awaits your return notify when ready will arrange air transportation yourself and wife no news concerning Oriole sorry regards Charles T. Alston."

Lanny said: "My six months' furlough is up. What do you say?" His wife answered: "Let's have two or three days to look around in Moscow. Then we can go."

He took the cablegram to his Red uncle. Having been in New York and read the newspapers, Jesse knew the name of this "fixer" for the administration. "Lanny," he said, "you know that I have never asked questions about your political or diplomatic job, whatever you call it. But I was sure you had one and I couldn't help guessing. It may be you will feel more free to talk now."

"I haven't been formally released from my promise, Uncle Jesse, but since there's no chance of my going back into Germany, I can talk a bit more freely."

"I have had the idea that you have access to Roosevelt."

"That is true."

"You will probably see him on your return?"

"I have every expectation of it."

"The head of my department in Narkomindel was interested in what you had to tell about Yenan. I took the liberty of giving him the idea that you were one of the President's confidants, and he suggested that it might be worth while for Stalin to have a talk with you. Would that interest you?"

"I can't think of anything that would interest me more, Uncle Jesse."

"You understand, it would have to be strictly on the QT."

"You ought to know by now that I am not a loose talker. I assume that I would be free to tell F.D. about it."

"Stalin would probably give you messages for him. There has been some talk of their meeting, you know."

"They ought to meet, and soon. I am sure that Stalin would be

surprised by F.D.'s grasp of the world situation, and by his desire for friendship between the two nations."

"The surprise might be mutual, Lanny."

"So much the better. I will go to Moscow as soon as you can arrange the trip, and I'll wait there until you find out if the meeting is to take place."

Lanny had observed that the Russians he met seldom brought up the name of the head of their government, and when others brought it up they spoke with reserve. He was not surprised to find even his free-spoken uncle displaying anxiety now. "You understand, Lanny, this is a great honour which is being suggested for you. Stalin almost never sees foreigners, with the exception of specially accredited diplomats."

"I appreciate that, Uncle Jesse." Lanny kept his smile to himself. "I will do my best not to damage your position here."

"It isn't that, my boy; I am an old man, and don't expect to be holding my present job very long. But I am deeply concerned about stopping this spring's German drive. Our position is desperate, and we need American help the worst way."

"I agree, Uncle Jesse. I will report what I have learned here, and anything that your Chief sees fit to entrust to me."

"Will you feel free to talk to him about Roosevelt?"

"I can't imagine any reason why I shouldn't. I am sure that if I had a chance to ask F.D. he would bid me tell everything I know."

"All right," said the old Red warhorse, reassured, "I will see what can be done."

"Make it plain that I am not seeking the interview," suggested the P.A. "I imagine I'll be more apt to get it that way."

"You wouldn't have a chance to get it the other way," replied the uncle.

## II

The plane to Moscow was a fast one; it flew late in the day, and four hours later it set them down on the airport in darkness. They would be under the bombs again, as they had been in Hong-Kong, ten thousand miles away. Their fellow-passengers on the ride were officials, mostly in uniform—no others rode in planes at present. They offered no sociability, and the Americans sat with their own thoughts.

They were taken to the Guest House of Narkomindel, which meant that they had been raised to the top of the social ladder. It is a one-time bourgeois mansion in the street called "Dead Alley." They were escorted to an elegant suite, and discovered to their satisfaction that here everything worked—not merely toilets and hot-water faucets,

but bells and door-locks and bureau drawers; the inkwells had ink and the pens did not scratch. One of their first adventures was the very grave major-domo, who presented a list of foods occupying four mimeograph pages and requested them to study it and mark those items which represented their preference.

They were extremely modest in their demands; they were judging the Soviet revolution by the standards of Yenan—but they discovered that a revolution a quarter of a century later may be something else again. All the articles of diet they asked for were provided, and the establishment insisted on adding a number of extras, enough to make four meals per diem, three of them of four courses each. They had great difficulty in persuading the old-style major-domo that they could not drink champagne with their breakfast. Russian hospitality, of which they had heard so much, threatened to overwhelm them after two or three months' of rice and turnips.

The climax came when their hosts discovered that they proposed to walk out and inspect the scenery of Moscow clad in sheepskin coats which they had purchased in Hengyang and worn in all sorts of weather, riding on donkeys and sleeping on *k'angs*. The gracious and cultivated young lady who had been assigned as their escort informed them that they were to be taken to one of the warehouses where the Soviets stored their furs and provided with proper coats and hats for the month of March in latitude 56 degrees north. When they protested that they had never owned such luxuries and could not afford them, they were told in a shocked voice that they were to receive them as gifts. When they said that they could not possibly accept such gifts, they were told that if they did not do it they would greatly hurt the feelings of their hosts. When they asked what they had done to deserve such bounty, the reply was: "You have been our friends; and you will be going out by the Archangel route, which is very cold." It appeared that they must have not merely coats but hats and felt boots; and when they tried to take the less expensive sorts they were told that these were "reserved" and that they must have the better kind.

When they were alone, Lanny said to his wife: "There is a possibility that I may be asked to talk with an especially important person. I had to give my word not to name him, except to another important person in Washington. You will have to forgive me."

"I will always forgive you," she answered—and then with a twinkle in her bright brown eyes: "Provided I am certain the important persons are of your own sex, not mine."

Lanny assured her: "So far they have all been. The only exception was the mistress of Premier Paul Reynaud—and she, poor distracted soul, was killed in an automobile wreck. She was going to send me to

the King of the Belgians to stop the Blitzkrieg, but we were too late. It was a suspicious-looking assignation, but old Pétain was present, so that made it respectable."

### III

On the little river called Moskva which flows into the upper Volga, the ancient tsars of Muscovy had built their capital. It had started with a fortress village called the Kremlin, fronting the river; its shape is that of an isosceles triangle, and inside are crowded many government buildings, and, since the ancient rulers were all pious killers, several churches with domes in the shape of onions turned upside down. These had been covered with gold leaf that shone splendidly in the sun, but now everything was camouflage. Outside the walls was the great Red Square, with the tomb in which the body of Lenin had been preserved—but now it had been spirited away to a hiding place where the bombs could not get it. The tomb had been made to look like a *dacha*, or country house; the Kremlin walls were painted to resemble blocks of houses with shrubbery; there were huge nets across the Moscow River, with camouflage to turn it into houses and groves of trees.

Everywhere you looked were anti-aircraft guns mounted, for this was one of the most fortified places in the world, and the box barrage that went up when enemy planes were reported at night was the most tremendous that had ever assailed the ears of Lanny Budd. The Guest House had a cellar, and when the sirens gave their long wails the guests dived into it, along with the major-domo and all his staff. It was the democracy of fear.

Moscow is a sprawling city, and its notable buildings are scattered, so that it has no show streets like Fifth Avenue or the boulevards of Paris. Now it had been half-emptied of its population. Its art treasures had been removed, and some of its buildings, like the famed Bolshoi theatre, had been blasted with bombs. Soldiers were everywhere, fresh ones going towards the west in trucks, and wounded coming back. Long lines of carts carried supplies to the vast armies which had been attacking or retreating with very few intervals for eight or nine months.

The military defences of the capital were secret and the visitors did not ask anything about them. They were taken to the only theatre that was going—most of the shows were with the troops. They inspected the beautiful subway stations, of which all Muscovites were so proud; but now they were air-raid shelters and very dirty. They were driven through the Park of Culture and Rest—covered with snow and closed to the public. If they had asked to see the great

Stalin truck factory, the favour might have been granted, even in wartime; but the son of Budd-Erling had seen all the factories he wanted in one life.

## IV

What they liked best was to go out and wander about the streets of Moscow under siege. These streets were snow-piled and litter-strewn, and the people in them were shivering, ill-clad and unwashed; yet there was about them an atmosphere of quiet endurance, of firm patience, of determination you could feel without understanding a word they spoke. "I wish I could get at their souls," Laurel said—but of course that was not possible. When you talked to them through an interpreter they would be thinking about that third person, and saying what that person would expect; if they didn't say it, the interpreter might put it in anyhow.

"They have been promised a new world for a quarter of a century," Lanny reminded his wife. "They have been clinging fast to that hope through all their sufferings."

"Are they any better off than they were?" she wondered.

"In wartime, not much, I imagine. But they have the hope, and that is what human beings live by. And at least they know what they don't want—to be ruled by Hitler."

"I try to see the good side of this system, Lanny; but I shrink so from thoughts of the terror. It seems to me these streets must smell of blood."

"Yes, darling; but you must remember, it's very old blood. The tsars ruled by terror, ever since we have any record of them."

"But does it have to go on forever? Communism promised to bring peace and fraternity."

"The Soviet revolution was a mild affair at the outset," explained the husband who had watched it. "Many of the Old Bolsheviks were gentle idealists, who hoped to convert their opponents. There was no terror until the attempt on Lenin, and later the assassination of Kirov."

Laurel had never heard the name of this friend and right-hand man of Stalin, who had been shot by a Soviet official with "White" connections. It had been that deed which had let loose the terror and the series of purges. "God knows I hate killing," declared Lanny; "but I didn't make this world, and I have to start from where it is. I face the uncomfortable fact that France and Belgium and Norway and the Balkan countries all went down before Hitler because he was able to find quislings who hated their own governments so much that they were willing to sell them out to an invader. But you don't hear anything about Soviet quislings—and why?"



"They were shot, I suppose."

"They were shot in advance, before they had a chance to do any of their quisling. Much as it hurts me, I have to face the fact that if Stalin hadn't purged his pro-Nazi elements, including his generals, there wouldn't have been any Soviet Union at this moment; Hitler would have the whole of this country, and that means he would have the world. If he is able to get Russia's resources, and make slaves out of the workers as he is now doing with Poles and Frenchmen and the rest, we could never beat him—not in the thousand years that he talks about."

There seemed to be no answer for that. Laurel said: "Of course, we have to take what allies we can get."

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He told his wife about the appointment, assuring her that the important personage was a member of his sex and not of hers. "He could not be more important if he tried," said Lanny—and while this wasn't telling her, it was certainly giving her a good chance to guess. He left her to the company of a group of her colleagues, male and female, who had read "The *Herrenvolk*." Soviet intellectuals like to sit up all night discussing world literature—while the head of their government and army sat up discussing world statecraft.

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referred the question to the President, who had replied that Mr. Budd possessed his complete confidence and that the Marshal should talk to him as if it were the President himself. If Lanny had known this, he would have been less surprised by what was now to happen.

## VI

They were driven to one of the buildings within the historic enclosure. At the door a soldier flashed a torchlight upon them; the soldier spoke a few words and they passed in. Lanny had read that Stalin lived in a simple apartment in one of these buildings, and he wondered if he was to be taken there. Or had the head man of Russia built himself a magnificent reception room, calculated to intimidate the visitor after the style of Mussolini and Hitler?

Without the formality of a knock, the visitor was led through an anteroom into a ground-floor room in one of the ancient Kremlin structures; a room of moderate size, oval in shape and with a vaulted ceiling, its walls partly panelled in white oak while the other parts were of smooth white plaster. There were three windows which gave upon the yard. A narrow carpet led to a flat-topped desk with an empty armchair, and beside it another armchair which the guest was invited to take. In a smaller chair nearby sat a youngish, slender man with dark hair and eyes; he rose, but was not introduced. Lanny guessed that he must be the interpreter.

The guest took his seat, and used a minute or two of time to inspect the room. At the right of Stalin's chair was a small stand with several telephones, of different colours to distinguish them. The desk was pretty well covered with books, and against the wall was a bookcase containing the works of Lenin and two sets of encyclopedias, the *Soviet* and the *Brockhaus*. Near the entrance was a glass case containing the death mask of Lenin; beside it stood an old-fashioned grandfather's clock in a case made of ebony. On the walls were portraits of Marx and Engels with their heavy whiskers. Through an open door Lanny could see a room with a long table and maps on the wall; doubtless it was the council room where the defence of the Soviet Union was discussed.

The officer went to a closed door and tapped gently. In perhaps half a minute the door was opened, and there entered a personage whose statue was in every school in the Soviet Union and whose portrait was in every home. In foreign lands, people who read magazines or newspapers had come to know these features as well as those they saw in the looking-glass.

In the portraits Stalin had somehow looked like a large man.

Perhaps he didn't have large people about him, or perhaps it was the general tendency to assume that all Russians were large. He was five feet five, which was several inches shorter than Lanny; stockily built, but not fat. He was dressed informally, in a dark blue blouse and trousers tucked into boots. His hair and heavy moustache were both iron-grey. He had a large head, and his complexion was sallow and marked by smallpox. His left arm was slightly shrunken, a defect he shared with the last of the German Kaisers.

He was a serious and busy man, and had little time for humour and none at all for formality. Lanny had risen, and they shook hands as if they were two Americans. Stalin said, in Russian: "Happy to meet you, Mr. Budd," and the translator at once spoke the words in English. Stalin took the chair at his desk, and the interpreter placed himself in front of it; by turning his head slightly, he faced one and then the other speaker. The staff officer excused himself, and without further preliminaries the interview was on.

## VII

Djugashvili was the name of this statesman's parents, and when they had had him christened they added Josef Vissarionovich Ivanovich David Nijerdse Chezhkov. It was Lenin who had suggested that he adopt the name of Stalin, which means steel, and is much easier to say. His father had been a drunken cobbler in the Georgian city of Tbilisi, which we call Tiflis. At great sacrifice the widowed mother had sent her bright little boy to a church school and then to a theological seminary, intending to make him a priest. But instead of concerning himself with the next world the bright little boy had taken up the notion of changing this one. He became a social revolutionary and scored a record: eight times imprisoned, seven times exiled, and six times escaped. He was not among those who retired to Switzerland or London and spent their time studying in libraries and expounding theories; he was a man of action, and came back to the battle again and again. Among his actions, according to reports, was the holding up of a truck carrying funds for a bank--this as a means of financing his revolutionary party.

Now in his early sixties Stalin had fought his way to the control of his party and his country, including an army of some four million men and growing fast. He had a deadly enemy who had attacked him without provocation and had crashed three or four hundred miles into his country, killing several million soldiers and civilians and dragging the able-bodied survivors off to slavery, after a fashion unknown in Europe for many centuries. Josef Stalin's whole mind was occupied

with the problem of defeating this enemy and hurling him out of Russia. He had sent the greater part of the government to safety, but he himself had stayed under the bombs. He hadn't summoned Lanny Budd in order to meet a charming playboy or to hear a story of adventure, but to glean every fact that might conduce to the success of Soviet arms.

At the Peace Conference, and on other occasions since, Lanny had been annoyed by persons who spoke Rumanian or Armenian or what not, and would pour out floods of eloquence without giving the interpreter a chance to get in more than a sentence or two. But the master of the Soviet Union was not among these futile ones. He spoke in a quiet, even tone, and when he had said a sentence or two he waited until the interpreter was through. Lanny followed the same technique, and was interested to observe that while he, Lanny, was speaking, Stalin was apparently staring at the pit of Lanny's stomach. This continued while the interpreter was speaking, and only when Stalin spoke did he raise his eyes to his auditor's. Then he seemed to be boring into the auditor's soul. Manifestly, he was a judge of men and a stern one; he was a prober of secrets, and if Lanny had been a Russian with secrets to hide, he would have been uneasy in his mind. But Stalin couldn't do any harm to Lanny, and all Lanny had to think about was that he might do some good to Stalin.

There were cigarettes and a tobacco box on the desk, and the host offered them. When Lanny said he did not smoke, Stalin proceeded to stuff a large and well-worn pipe. Thereafter, when he was not speaking, he puffed—but Lady Nicotine did not exercise her supposed soothing effect upon his mind. He pressed the visitor with questions: why had Hong-Kong fallen so quickly, and what had been the attitude of the Chinese there, and what were food conditions in the interior of the country, and to what extent was Chungking keeping its truce with Yen-an? Now and then he made a note on a pad. A P.A., no stranger to diplomatic subtleties, wondered if this was a pretence, and if a recording was being made of this interview.

## VIII

Lanny told what he had seen in Yen-an, and whom he had met. How was Mao Tse-tung getting along, and what had he said about his prospects? Lanny described the circumstances of the interview, and repeated everything the head of the Border Government had spoken. Lanny had heard many stories about the operations of the Chinese guerillas, and these were important, because Stalin was training great numbers of Russians to operate in that way against the Germans;

supplies would be dropped to them by parachute, information would be sent by radio codes, and they would cause a steady draining of German resources.

The Premier brought up the subject of Budd-Erling. He had heard about its product, and was pleased to have one of America's industrial achievements described to him. Lanny said: "You must understand, I am six months behind the time. I have no doubt that since Pearl Harbour the enterprise has been growing like a mushroom. For many years my father has been telling me that the future of the world would be decided by air-power, and now he is having the chance for which he has been asking."

"Your father used to make planes for the Nazis, I am told," remarked the Red chief, with studied casualness.

"Understand, I don't defend his course. I pleaded with him against it, but he took the stand that he was a business-man, and offered his wares in the open market. The Germans kept his enterprise alive for several years."

"I am familiar with the point of view, Mr. Budd. Business is business."

"I repeat what my father has told me many times: it is not the planes which are important, but the power to produce planes; and that remains in America."

"It is the planes which are important to us at present," This with grim decisiveness.

"I can only tell you what my father and his experts were discussing last September, before I left home. The problem as regards your country is not so much the making of planes as of their delivery. If we ship them by way of Archangel, the submarines will get most of them. If we ship them by the Persian Gulf, it is difficult to assemble them in the midst of desert sand. There seemed to be general agreement that the solution of the problem must be by way of Alaska and Siberia."

"It is too cold, and there are too many fogs, Mr. Budd. If we are to use the northern route, it would be shorter to fly over the North Pole."

"You are speaking of bombers, sir; but the Budd-Erling is a fighter plane, with short range. We already have bases in Alaska, and I take it for granted that we are now constructing a chain of them. If you could do the same from the Chukotsky Peninsula westward, the problem would be solved. It is my father's opinion that the losses would be small, compared to those which would be inevitable over the Archangel route. My father does not like that route, and I doubt very much if our government does either."

"We are considering the matter from every point of view, Mr. Budd. My understanding is that Admiral Standley is coming here as ambassador, and doubtless he will bring a technical staff with him."

## IX

Now and then, as this interrogation went on, the visitor would be wondering: "Does he know that I have been a friend of the head Nazis?" It seemed unlikely that Stalin's efficient secret service would have failed to unearth such a fact. Lanny had decided that he wouldn't bring up the subject; he could suppose that Uncle Jesse might have taken the liberty of passing on his guess that Lanny had been a secret agent of President Roosevelt working in Germany. In any case, Stalin would have his suspicions; there had been an old saying among Russians: "Lenin trusts only Stalin and Stalin trusts nobody." And the record showed that Lenin had distrusted Stalin!

Perhaps that was the basis of the great man's next remark. "I should like to ask you, Mr. Budd—how does it happen that the son of a great American capitalist is sympathetic with the Soviet point of view?"

"I must be frank, sir, and inform you that I am a Socialist, not a Communist. But I am against Hitlerism with all my soul, and I welcome every ally in that fight. It was my mother's elder brother, Jesse Blackless, who gave me my first push toward the left, when I was a small boy. He took me to meet an Italian syndicalist, Barbara Pugliese, of whom you may have heard."

"I met her at international gatherings in the old days."

"She produced a deep impression on my mind, and after that I began meeting various persons of leftist turn of mind. At the Paris Peace Conference I acted as secretary-translator to Professor Charles Alston, and there I came to know George D. Herron and Lincoln Steffens, and was the means of bringing Steffens and Colonel House into touch with three representatives of the new Soviet government who came to Paris. At that time, we were all working desperately to stop the attacks of world capitalism upon your new government. We succeeded in persuading President Wilson to appoint Herron to a conference at an island called Prinkipo, if you remember."

"I am not apt to forget any of the events of those days, Mr. Budd."

"We failed, but things might have been much worse, and doubtless would have been if we had not striven so hard. The effort was important in my personal life, because I got an education out of it, and I made a few friends. It was Professor Alston who vouched for me to President Roosevelt."

"You know the President well, I am told."

"I have had perhaps a dozen long conferences with him—always at night, and in his bedroom, where he works lying down. I have never spoken of that to anyone, but I tell you about it, because I am sure the President would wish me to do so. I should prefer that you keep the matter between us—at least until I have found out what my next assign-

ment is to be. Let me explain that I was on my way to England on an especially confidential mission when I got both my legs broken in an aeroplane crash at sea. I was told to take a six months' furlough, and that is about up. I am well again, and expect to have another assignment."

"Thank you for the explanation. I am greatly interested in your President, and glad to meet anyone who knows him well."

"You should meet him yourself, sir. He is one of the most delightful of companions, and his sincerity convinces everybody—except, of course, those who hate his efforts to reform our economic system."

"I should like nothing better than to meet him; but it would be a long trip for him, and I, unfortunately, cannot leave Moscow while this crisis continues."

"If all goes well, I should see the President in a few days, and if you have any message you care to entrust to me, I will deliver it faithfully."

"Tell him that we need help of every sort, and we need it now. All our information is that the Hitlerites intend to make a new onslaught within a month or so—depending on the weather."

"Do you have any idea where it will be centred?"

"It will be all along the front, and we cannot tell the main objective; it may be another try at Moscow, or it may be for the oil of the Caucasus. It will probably depend upon where they find a weak spot. Very certainly they will throw in everything they have, and we shall be strained to the uttermost."

"I understand your idea, sir, and will report it."

x.

Lanny had said that his own knowledge was out-of-date; but he knew enough about F.D.'s position to understand that there would be a score of nations clamouring for armaments, and especially planes: Britain for her own shores and for North Africa; the Free French for their colonies, and the Dutch for theirs; the Chinese, the Australians, the New Zealanders—to say nothing of American generals and admirals on many fronts, and civilians in every harbour of the Atlantic and the Pacific. What F.D. would want was Stalin's political views and intentions, and especially what Lanny thought about the matter—did he mean what he said?

So now the P.A. ventured: "May I ask you one or two questions, sir? I meet a good many influential persons, and they will all wish to know: Will the Russians hold out?"

"Concerning that you may answer without any qualification. We shall fight on our present lines, and retreat when we are forced to. We shall fight every foot of the way, wherever we are. We shall fight



on the Volga, and in the Urals, and in Siberia, if we have to retreat that far. Whatever is left of the Soviet system will fight Hitlerism to the last breath."

"That assurance will be comforting to some of my friends, who do not understand the difference between the two systems as clearly as I do."

The Premier raised his keen grey eyes to the visitor's face and watched him closely. "Tell me, Mr. Budd—when your friends ask you what is the difference between the two systems, what do you tell them?"

Lanny knew that that was a crucial question; but he didn't have to hesitate, having answered it many times, in his own mind and elsewhere. "First of all, I try to make it plain that the Nazi system is based upon a racial point of view—really a national one—whereas the Soviet system is based upon an economic point of view, and applies to all races and nations equally. Under your system it is possible to believe in the brotherhood of man and to work toward it; whereas the Nazis offer the rest of the world nothing but perpetual slavery and war."

Lanny could see by the look on his host's face that he had passed his examination successfully. Without waiting to get his marks he ventured to go on: "When people hear that I have talked with Premier Stalin, they will crowd round to ask: 'If he wins, is he going to try to take all the rest of Europe?'"

"What would I do with the rest of Europe, Mr. Budd?"

"You must tell me that, sir, in order that I may be able to quote you."

"You may say without qualification: The Soviet Union does not want the rest of Europe. The Soviet peoples have all the land and resources they need; they want only peace, so that they can develop what they have. Let the rest of Europe work out its own problems in its own way—subject to but one restriction, that it does not permit itself to be turned into a centre of intrigue against the Soviet peoples, such as we saw in the so-called *cordon sanitaire* during the past quarter century."

"There is a great deal of talk in America about an international organization to preserve the peace after this war. Tell me what you say to that."

"We shall be for it without reservation. I point out to you what our record has been on the League of Nations. We joined as soon as they would let us and we stayed until they booted us out. But America never joined."

"Would you assent to the idea that America, Britain, and the Soviet Union shall take the lead in forming such an organization, and constitute its nucleus?"

"I would say that if we failed to do it, we should be indicted before the bar of history."

"Is that your personal attitude, Premier Stalin, or is it the attitude of your government?"

"It is both. I am familiar with the fact that people in your country have been taught to think of me as a dictator, like Hitler; but there is no resemblance between our functions. I never act without consulting the membership of our Politburo; and if I should find that the majority opinion was against me, I should not act. I will illustrate by telling you what happened in the case of the defence of Leningrad. The majority of the group thought that the city could not successfully be defended. I had read Peter the Great's opinion that it could be defended by artillery, and I advocated that we try. The question was fought out with fierce arguments, and in the end I was able to persuade the majority. So far, it appears fortunate that I succeeded."

"The American people are disturbed by the idea of dictatorship. When they question me, I remind them of the Marxist formula, which Lenin approved, that after the victory of Communism the state would wither away. Do you still hold to that idea?"

"It would never occur to me to revise any of Lenin's ideas. I consider myself his pupil, and I ask myself one question: What would he have done in this situation?"

"One could hardly expect any state to wither in wartime," Lanny ventured.

"Surely not. You may be quite sure that when you arrive in America, you will find the state growing rapidly, and you will hear President Roosevelt being called a dictator."

"I have already heard it a hundred times," smiled the visitor.

"The capitalist state, in the Marxist-Leninist interpretation, is an agency of class repression. In a classless society there would be no function for it. As fast as people get education, they will assert themselves, and a democratic society will come automatically."

"I may say that is your ultimate aim, Premier Stalin?"

"I myself have said it many times, and so have all our theorists. But we do not use the name democracy as a camouflage for the continuation of wage slavery."

Lanny smiled again. "I perceive, sir, that you have some acquaintance with the political theories of American big business."

The son of Budd-Erling was supposed to have come here to give information to the Soviet leader; but he took the occasion to explain

that he would like to take information to his own Chief. He knew pretty well what his Chief would want to know; and also he could guess what ideas his Chief would like to put into the mind of the Red Premier. "Tell me, sir," he ventured, "what sources of information you have concerning my country."

"I get many reports, and also I have editorials and leading features translated from your newspapers. I know that when your Red-baiters, such as Mr. Hearst and Colonel McCormick, talk about democracy, they mean the opposite of what I mean. To them it is the defence of their class system; the freedom enjoyed under it is their freedom, not that of their workers."

"You have those gentry right, sir; but do not make the mistake of exaggerating their influence. The people read their papers but do not take their political advice. In the last three elections President Roosevelt was opposed by seventy per cent of our capitalist press, and yet he was elected."

"You would oblige me if you could tell me why your people read such vile papers."

"The reasons might be difficult for a foreigner to understand. The papers are old and long established, and people are used to their names and their format. They have huge sums of money and buy the best talent of all sorts—cartoonists, sports writers, movie gossip, and above all, comic strips. The children follow those stories and clamour for them; a large percentage of the children never grow up mentally, so they go on reading the same thing. When it comes to voting, they are frequently deceived, but in the long run the idea of their class interest does penetrate their minds."

"America is indeed a difficult country to understand—or even to believe in. You have such violent contrasts."

"We are a violent people, sir—and my guess is that both the Japs and the Nazis are going to find it out. As for newspaper proprietors there are two spoiled children who inherited vast fortunes, and have used them according to their furious prejudices. One of them came to Naziland and found everything to his taste; he made business deals with Hitler, and defended him with ardour, up to the point where the persecution of the Jews became too extreme, and he had to remember several million readers and a large block of his department-store advertisers. But not all our great capitalists have such predatory minds; there are men of social conscience among them, and President Roosevelt has been labouring to train a group of these in the public service."

"But President Roosevelt cannot live forever, Mr. Budd. What are we to expect if he should die?"

"He is doing just what Lenin did, and what you are trying to

continue: building a party which will keep his ideas and ideals alive. One of these is friendship and co-operation with the Soviet Union. Our Vice-President, Henry Wallace, is just as ardent in holding to that idea, and I do not believe the Republican Party will ever again come back into power, except by adopting the New Deal programme in essentials. You may have observed that tendency in Wendell Willkie's campaign; he made the Old Party bosses furious by the concessions he made to New Deal thinking."

"I was struck by that fact, Mr. Budd."

"If I may make a suggestion, sir, nothing will promote President Roosevelt's desires so well as expressions from you of democratic tendencies and intentions in your own country. You follow Lenin's words, while we in America follow Lincoln's: 'government of the people, by the people, for the people.' The nearer you approach to that platform, the easier it will become for our two peoples to co-operate in world affairs."

"I will bear your suggestion in mind, Mr. Budd." Could it be that there was a touch of dryness in the Red statesman's voice?

"Let me make it plain," persisted the idealistic visitor; "I am not speaking my own thoughts, but those of the President. In my last talk with him he referred to the Soviet Union, and I ventured to point out that its distrust of the capitalist powers was no phobia, but was based on historic facts. The President replied: 'I know it well, and I have a Fifty-Year Plan for making friends with the Soviet Union.'"

The Premier stared at his guest while these words were being translated, and then his stern features relaxed first into a smile and then into a laugh, the only one during this long interview. "Capital! Capital!" he exclaimed. "He is a man of true humour." Then, after these words had been put into English: "Tell him for me that we shall try to exceed our quota, and to finish ahead of schedule." These were the technical terms, the slogans of the *Piatiletka*, the Five-Year Plan, and even the self-effacing translator grinned as he repeated them for the guest.

## XII

It was an excellent note on which to close. The hour was one in the morning, and Lanny had had two hours of this busy man's time. No doubt he had a stack of documents piled on his reading-table, as F.D. invariably did. He pressed a button, and in a minute or two a servant appeared, wheeling a tray with various liquors and a plate of dry crackers.

"I am going to give you a toast," declared Stalin. "In what do you prefer to drink it?"

"In what looks to be red wine," was the guest's reply. "I am afraid of your Russian firewater." The host was amused when this phrase was translated to him, and he asked, was it American? Lanny told him it was the very earliest—American Indian.

The Premier poured out two glasses of the red wine and handed one to Lanny. He held his up, and the guest followed suit. "To the friendship of our two countries!" proclaimed "Uncle Joe." "May we teach you industrial democracy at the same time that you are teaching us political democracy!"

They clinked glasses and drank. Lanny knew that custom required him to drain his glass and then hold it inverted over his head as a sign that he had done so. He complied, and his host showed that he was pleased by this conformity. He took the glass and filled it again, then filled his own. "And now, your turn."

Lanny recited: "To the health of Stalin and Roosevelt. May they live to carry out a programme of democracy, with freedom of speech and religion for all men." He wasn't sure if the Soviet chief would drink that toast, but the chief showed no sign of distaste. The visitor said: "I have kept you too long, sir. I am honoured by the confidence you have given me, and I will faithfully report your words."

"You are a well-informed man, Mr. Budd, and good company. The next time you come this way, I hope you won't fail to let me know."

He had already pressed another button; the young officer appeared, and escorted the visitor into the anteroom, where he donned his furlined coat and hat, and went out into the bitter cold and utter blackness of that city of the tsars. Only the stars far overhead were not blacked out. Perhaps they didn't know there was a war on, and the human insects on a remote obscure planet were using the forces of Nature and their own minds to bring an end to one another's existence.

The presidential agent, going over the interview in his mind, was saying: "God grant that he means it!"





